

CONTRASTING JOHN HOWARD YODER AND STANLEY HAUSER ON BEING
THE CHURCH IN A CULTURE BUT NOT OF THE CULTURE

by

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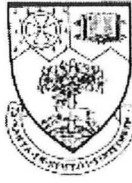
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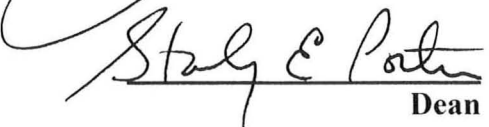
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Contrasting John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas on Being the Church in a Culture
but not of the Culture

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This thesis examines the contrasts and constructive value in the writings of John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas concerning the relationship of the church to its surrounding culture. The writings of each author are individually examined to understand their common perspectives on how the church should function within its surrounding culture. Differences between the two authors are then described to highlight each one's distinctive contributions and missteps. The last chapter argues for the constructive value of their combined voice concerning the church addressing and living in culture.

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Contrasting John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas on Being the Church in a Culture, yet not of its Culture.

Relationship of Church and Culture: The question

Everywhere the church of Christ is challenged by its surrounding culture. It is challenged to conform to its surrounding culture, to its values and practices. This challenge comes in many ways. In North America the church faces issues such as the war in Iraq and gay marriage. What is the proper response of the church to these issues, not just in terms of making moral statements, but also in practical demonstration of the gospel? How should the church relate to the powers of the culture around it? In general, the church of North America has rarely answered this question homogenously as evidenced in the responses within the church brought to various issues, including those mentioned above.¹ Among the problems caused by this has been confusion concerning on what the church stands for by those outside and inside the church.

John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas are two authors who have written a great deal on this subject. They express great concern for the church to understand its mission in and to its culture. These two authors are often linked together as having similar views concerning this question, and rightly so. Hauerwas hails Yoder as a key influence upon his thinking and writing.² Yet, there are definite differences between the two. By understanding the differences between these two authors I believe a helpful picture of their thought can be gained. This will assist in understanding their call to the church and its relationship with surrounding culture.

Plan of Address

Many definitions of church and culture can be offered. Defining church can vary from

¹ For example, churches have supported the war in Iraq and others have renounced it as unjust.

² Rasmusson asserts that Hauerwas' theology is 'unthinkable without the extensive influence of Yoder'. Rasmusson, Arne, *The Church as Polis*, (University of Notre Dame Press: Notre Dame, Indiana) 1994. Pg. 24 Hauerwas himself makes this statement in a number of places. For one example see Hauerwas, Stanley, 'Why the 'Sectarian Temptation' is a Misrepresentation: A Response to James Gustafson' in *The Hauerwas Reader* ed. John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Durham, NC: Duke University Press) 2001

any persons who call or consider themselves as Christians to only those who regularly practice disciplines such as church attendance, Bible reading, evangelism and others. Also definitions can range from the universal church spanning the course of human history to a particular congregation in a specific community.³ Definitions of culture likewise range broadly from the identifying marks of a particular group to the structures of how a particular society functions. Both authors give definite definitions for these terms that will be necessary to understand to comprehend their thought. I will give working definitions of these terms as I understand them later in this introduction. This will provide some capacity to interact and critique Yoder and Hauerwas' work.

In chapters one and two I will describe the thought of first John Howard Yoder and then Stanley Hauerwas. Both authors thought on the nature and mission of the church in relationship to the culture that surrounds it will be described. This will begin with the church in its nature as a called community. The nature of the powers at work within surrounding culture will be examined. While both authors write within a particular culture, North America, their work contains principles that can be insightful for the church in any culture. They write on the call for the church to be distinct from its surrounding culture so that it can bring an objective critique to its culture. As a minority in its culture, the church may experience unpopularity, even hostility, for its loyalty to the gospel. The church should refuse to hold sway over surrounding culture, yet still bring concrete blessing to its culture, as it is God's instrument for bringing change in the surrounding culture.

This structure for outlining their thought, I believe, fits the nature of their thought. The nature of their thought is focused on the church staying true to its calling and identity. This calling and identity will make it distinct in whatever culture it resides within. There is always a separation between church and culture, part of which is based upon their basic orientation. The church is focused upon following Christ, where the culture is focused on following or seeking its perceived goods, some of which may mirror the church, others will not. Both

³ Even this does not exhaust the possible definitions or usages of the word 'church'. This has not touched the definition of the word as used in the New Testament nor perhaps the most common usage today, that of a building\structure used by a congregation for public meetings.

authors have their own ideas in how and what this separation entails.

After looking at the thought of Yoder in chapter one and Hauerwas in chapter two, each will be compared against the other to evaluate their thoughts in chapter three. Looking at their personalities will give some insight into their message and how their message is impacted by their personality. Differences in each author's methodology will also reveal some insights into their thought. After this, some particular differences in their writing on the relationship between church and surrounding culture will be examined. Finishing the third chapter are individual critiques of each author covering any items not addressed previously.

Finally in chapter four, I will give what I believe are some constructive insights for the church in relation to its surrounding culture based upon the work of Yoder and Hauerwas. This will cover the mission of the church, the relationship of the church to its surrounding culture and constructive elements of an important tenet of both Yoder and Hauerwas', pacifism.

Defining Church

As mentioned above the term church can be used for a variety of items and concepts. In this section I will define church for the context of this thesis. Church, in this context, must be able to relate to the culture surrounding it. This eliminates the definition of church as a building from consideration. But also that of the 'universal' church, the followers of Jesus Christ throughout history, even of the Old Testament believers as well. While the church may draw from resources from their experiences, work and example, those of the past are not within the contemporary culture the church finds itself in.

Three aspects to the definition of church are important to this thesis. First, is that the church is made up of individuals who are committed followers of Jesus Christ. This commitment to follow Jesus Christ can only be made by the individual for themselves. This commitment is not simply mental or verbal, but one of practice and lifestyle. The church is made up of those who seek to conform themselves to the character and teaching of Jesus recognizing Him as Lord of all, including their life. The level of intensity in desiring to

conform to the character and teaching of Jesus may vary from person to person.

A second aspect to the definition of the church is that it is a community of believers. No believer is the church by themselves, they are or should be part of the church. I say 'should be' because there are some who might think that they can follow Jesus as Lord by themselves.⁴ This is incorrect and contrary to the teaching of Scripture.⁵ It is also impossible to follow some of the commands of Scripture without community, such as Jesus' command to love one another.⁶ Believers are to be in community with one another, otherwise their growth as followers of Jesus Christ will suffer, perhaps not even survive.⁷ The church is the community of believers having made that 'spiritual' commitment, but within the physical community of believers, there will be those who have not made that commitment.⁸ These people may be in the community of the church, even participate deeply within the life of the church, but are not part of the church. This is because they do not meet the first aspect or requirement of church membership, the commitment to Jesus as Lord.

The third aspect to the definition of church important here is that the church is always within a culture. This aspect has a number of different pieces to it. First, the church is particular to its culture. It will reflect its culture in particular ways, such as language, but also in terms of values and customs. This reflection causes questions and struggles in the relationship between the church and its culture. Second, the church cannot withdraw from its surrounding culture. There have been, and are currently, movements within Christianity which try or at least state their desire is to be withdrawn from the surrounding culture, but they still are within their surrounding culture.⁹ No church can escape its surrounding culture,

⁴ This is not speaking about those who may for some extraordinary circumstances be forced into isolation from other Christians. This is speaking about voluntary or conscious disassociation from other believers.

⁵ One prominent image of the church given in Scripture is Paul's description of the church as a body in 1 Corinthians 12. His teaching here strongly states the necessity for believers to be in community with one another.

⁶ John 15:17 There are many other commands in Scripture which demand a social context with other believers to fulfill.

⁷ Note Hebrews 10:25 exhortation for the believers to continue to meet together for their mutual benefit. This is not the only Scriptural command which calls for or assumes community. Another example would be the 'one another' commands within the New Testament.

⁸ This is the key implication of Jesus' parable on the wheat and the weeds (Matt. 13:24-30)

⁹ One example of this would be some sects of the Old Order Mennonites, such as those found in Waterloo

even by leaving it for a new culture, as the Amish and other Anabaptists did over their history, still aspects of the culture they left stayed with them.¹⁰

Defining Gospel

The term gospel is used frequently in this work. A working definition is appropriate to ensure clear understanding of what is meant by the term. Certainly the definition of ‘good news’ is not sufficient, but it is a start. What is the good news contained in the gospel? The good news of the gospel is based upon the person, work, and teaching of Jesus Christ.¹¹ It is good news about who He is and what He has done for humanity and the world. The effects of Jesus upon humanity and the world have some overlap, but for the purpose of definition they will be separated here.

Gospel in relation to humanity

There are many facets of the gospel that relate to humanity. First, is the most recited facet, that Jesus died to save humanity from sin.¹² This was a substitutionary death by Christ for the sin of all humanity. This act was the highest demonstration of God’s love towards humanity.¹³ It freed humanity from the legal guilt of sin before God, thus also His wrath because of that sin and the consequence of eternal separation from God.¹⁴ The penalties associated with sin, both temporal and eternal, God took upon Himself in dying on the cross of Calvary. This forgiveness is available to all humanity without exception.¹⁵ The necessary

Country, Ontario Canada. A more well known example would be the Amish of Pennsylvania, which the Old Order Mennonites are historically related.

¹⁰ For example, the Amish retained German as their language. Another group of Mennonites growing currently in Waterloo County and other areas in Ontario are ‘Mexican Mennonites’. Despite living in various countries over their history such as Russia, Mexico and now Canada, this group still speaks a dialect of German as their mother tongue.

¹¹ The person of Jesus Christ is His identity as the Son of God, being fully God and fully human. His work includes His life, death, resurrection, ascension, and continuing ministry for believers before God and Second Coming.

¹² 1 Cor. 15:3, 1 Pet. 2:24, 3:18 are just a few verses which state this. In the remainder of this section it can be assumed that the verses given are not the only places in Scripture that relate to the concept mentioned.

¹³ Rom. 5:8

¹⁴ Heb. 2:17, Rom. 3:24-25

¹⁵ John 3:16

step for each person is acceptance of this as truth and a decision to live one's life acknowledging Jesus Christ as Lord.¹⁶ Acceptance of Jesus as Saviour from sin and Lord of all brings reconciliation with God.¹⁷ For those who do not accept Jesus as Saviour and Lord there is judgment awaiting them on the Day of Judgment.¹⁸

The death of Jesus Christ bought or redeemed those who believe in what He has done for them. Believers are now free from the bondage or dominance of sin and are now servants of their new Lord.¹⁹ This obliges the believer to conform his or her life to the example of Jesus and the teaching of Scripture.²⁰ This is done in community, as another aspect of the gospel is that those who believe in Jesus are part of a new people, the people of God, the church.²¹ Becoming one of a new people is part of the new life that Jesus gives to believers. That new life has been given to believers is shown in, and in some measure comes from, the resurrection of Jesus.²² This new life is not just eternity with God in Heaven, but also a new life given from the moment of conversion for life on this earth until death. It is empowered by the Holy Spirit, who indwells each believer, as they are now a child and heir of God.²³

This new status also brings a calling from God upon His people. They have a ministry of reconciliation calling others to accept Jesus as Lord, bringing reconciliation with God.²⁴ Believers in Christ are also called to be holy, that is, separated to the purposes of God. This requires that their lifestyles conform to God's standard for living.²⁵ Believers are called to follow the leading of God in doing the work He has for them in this world. God has given gifts, through the Holy Spirit, to all believers to accomplish His purposes.²⁶ What is waiting for the believer when life in this world is over is eternity with God in Heaven.²⁷

¹⁶ Heb. 4:2, Rom. 10:9-13

¹⁷ Rom. 5:9-11, 1 Cor. 6:18

¹⁸ Matt. 25:31-46, Rev. 20:15

¹⁹ 1 Cor. 6:20, 7:23, Rom. 6:17-18

²⁰ Heb. 12:2, 1 Pet. 2:21

²¹ Gal. 4:21-31, Eph. 2:11-18

²² Rom. 6:4

²³ 1 Cor. 6:19, Rom 8:9-17

²⁴ 2 Cor. 4:18-21

²⁵ 1 Pet. 1:15, 2:9

²⁶ 1 Cor. 12:7, Eph. 4:12-13, 1 Pet. 4:10

²⁷ John 14:1-3, Rev. 21:3

Gospel in relation to world

The gospel is not limited to humanity. The work of Christ also has application and meaning for the powers, the systems of how the world works in structuring human existence. These powers have been instituted by God.²⁸ These powers have not remained obedient to God hence becoming the enemy of God, His people, even of humanity in general.²⁹ Jesus, through the resurrection and through His life, has shown the authority of the powers to be less than His.³⁰ They are not the ultimate authority, Christ is.³¹ The gospel of Christ then includes the proclamation that the powers are to conform as well to the authority of Christ as Lord.

This is a brief summary of the meaning and implications of the gospel message for humanity and the world. It is probably quite clear I am merging a number of different views of the atonement, of which I have not included all I could.³² This is the message that the church brings to its surrounding culture.

Defining Culture

Like 'church', culture is a term that has broad usage. It can speak of particular people groups, of customs, of shared values and more. My purpose here is to give a description that will help define culture so that the views of Yoder and Hauerwas can be understood with greater clarity.

Culture is first of all social. A person can be part of a culture, but they would never comprise a culture all to themselves. A culture functions as a means of organization for people. It helps define social expectations and obligations. These expectations are not necessarily explicitly stated, but are simply part of how the culture guides and shapes people to relate to one another. It also refers to how people do things. To some degree what is appropriate and what is not, or the relative merit of particular actions or attitudes come from

²⁸ 1 Pet. 2:13-15, Col. 1:16

²⁹ Eph. 6:12, Gal. 1:4

³⁰ This is the Christus Victor model of the atonement.

³¹ Col. 2:15

³² For example I have not included the demonstration of God's justice or the governmental model in any direct way.

the surrounding culture.³³ Some measure of the definition of right and wrong is shaped by culture.

Interrelated with this social dynamic, culture is shaped and shapes the values of those within it. Culture describes the values of those within. Values are the goals which are held in highest priority. Some of these values might be described as materialism or punctuality, such as in Western cultures. Values might be community and respect of ancestors, living or dead, in African cultures. Regardless of the particular culture, that culture can be identified by the overall values that it emphasizes. Not only does culture emphasize certain values, but culture tends to seek to conserve those values and pass them on to the future generation.

This is not to say that culture cannot or does not change. Culture is constantly in flux as there are many influences constantly at work upon it. For example, technological advances can have a drastic effect upon culture. The automobile has had a drastic impact upon each culture where it is available. It can provide opportunities and capabilities impossible or extremely difficult for those without. This changes how a culture structures itself and sees how best to achieve its values, even changing those values. Human agency is also at work upon culture. Over time, even a short period of time, a group of people can choose to move in particular directions that can change its culture. For example, Peter J. Haas in his book, *Morality after Auschwitz*, wrestles with the radical shift that took place within 1930's Germany which allowed for the Holocaust to happen.³⁴ Part of this shift was allowed due to economic, historical, and religious factors, but what cannot be escaped are the human decisions within the culture which allowed the Jews and other undesirables to be knowingly eliminated in such an inhuman and methodical fashion. So culture both seeks to maintain itself, yet also is constantly in motion. Some values and methods change imperceptibly, others can change quickly, too fast for careful consideration by those within.

Another influence at work upon culture is that of the powers. The powers are the structures or agencies at work within and around culture. These can be material, moral and

³³ For example, in North American culture it is generally less appropriate to cheat on ones' spouse than to lose ones' temper. In African cultures, it is the reverse.

³⁴ Haas, Peter J., *Morality after Auschwitz: The Radical Challenge of the Nazi Ethic* (Fortress Press: Philadelphia, PA) 1998.

spiritual. They work to order culture and humanity. Their original purpose, as created and designed by God, was to keep stability in human society allowing humanity to function within regularity and order. These powers have fallen from God's original design. They continue to order culture, but not towards the original purpose of God. They are still subject to Him, but do not function in subjection to God's authority. These powers cannot be removed, otherwise culture would descend into chaos. Therefore, the powers must be reckoned with by humanity, not as that which serves humanity by bringing order, but as that which seeks to enforce order upon humanity.

Nazi Germany highlights one of the less pleasant realities concerning culture. Culture is not something that is all good, though neither is it all evil. Even in Nazi Germany, the elderly and children were cared for. That culture had defined ideas of which elderly and children were valued and worthy of care and which were not. Culture is not amoral, that is without moral definition or content. Culture is inherently moral, it reflects both immoral and moral characteristics and qualities. Every culture is somewhere on a continuum of perfect alignment with God's design for humanity or complete rejection of that design. No culture is at either extreme. The only culture which will fulfill complete alignment with God's design will be the Kingdom of God instituted after the Second Coming of Christ.

Finally, no person is completely defined by his or her culture. No one completely agrees with his or her culture in all respects or at least does not act out all the home culture's values at all times. Neither does culture determine what decisions any person will make. It may guide and shape decisions and values, but the responsibility for each and every decision still lies with the individual. Different people have different interests, some which may go against the mainstream of their culture. When enough people, or a strong enough message, decide differently than their culture, change can occur.

How Yoder and Hauerwas use these terms of church, gospel, and culture are not necessarily synonymous with how I have defined them here. Their ideas on these concepts will be outlined in the chapters following.

Chapter One - John Howard Yoder

John Howard Yoder, while coming from the Anabaptist tradition, has had a voice that has grown far past that of his own tradition. His work, particularly *The Politics of Jesus*, has caused many theologians to think again on many ethical questions, especially that of pacifism,¹ yet his writing went far past the issue of pacifism and just war theory. Yoder wrote powerfully concerning the relationship of the church and the surrounding culture. Titles such as *The Christian Witness to the State, For the Nations*, and *The Politics of Jesus* show this theme. His insights into the relationship of the church to its surrounding culture are worthy of attention for the challenge they give to think carefully about what it means to be followers of Christ in the world.

His insight into various issues is quite profound. Often his approach to dealing with issues such as just war theory was to look again at the questions and see if these questions were even valid. He did not seek to simply answer old questions with new answers, but changed the questions to try to look at old problems differently.² His views are carefully and articulately laid out. With the amount of influence he has had his writings are quite worth seeking to understand.

This chapter will outline Yoder's view concerning the nature of the church, of culture and examine the relationship between them. Yoder does this primarily by focusing on the relationship through the lens of the church's position and responsibility towards culture. This relationship will be broken into different aspects in the interest of seeking clarity in describing the detail of Yoder's views. We will look first at Yoder's concept of the two aeons; the two realms at work in the world. Then Yoder's description of how the church is distinct from its surrounding culture. This distinction allows the church to critique its culture. Critiquing its surrounding culture will in some measure cause the church to be a minority, as well as unpopular in its culture. This minority status aids the church in

¹ In 'John H. Yoder, Ecumenical Neo-Anabaptist: A Biographical Sketch', Mark Thiessen Nation cites a variety of authors in their praise and view of the influence of *The Politics of Jesus*. Stanley Hauerwas, Chris K. Huebner, Harry J. Huebner and Mark Thiessen Nation editors *The Wisdom of the Cross, Essays in Honor of John Howard Yoder* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company) pg. 21

² Hauerwas, Stanley, in *The Wisdom of the Cross*, pg. xi

understanding that its mission is not to manage its surrounding culture, though it is still to bring tangible blessings to its culture. This is because the church is God's instrument for bringing positive change to the surrounding culture. Finally some description of Yoder's methodology will conclude this chapter.

The Church

In giving his initial definition for the church, Yoder is quite direct. He goes first to the New Testament for the meaning of the word as used by Jesus and the writers of the New Testament. He notes the meaning of 'church', originally a secular word, was that of a public gathering to deal with community business, which currently might be best translated by the words assembly, parliament or town meeting.³ For Yoder, there is more to the church than simply doing some imprecise form of business. The church is to be about the business of God.

Yoder's underlying description of the church is that of a revolutionary community. "This is the original revolution; the creation of a distinct community with its own deviant set of values and its coherent way of incarnating them."⁴ This description, written in a time when liberation theology was in vogue, gives Yoder's understanding of the type of revolution the church was formed by God to be. As he says, "the first level of the church's faithfulness, and in a sense the test of the validity of everything else she shall say later, will be her own obedience to the standards of discipleship."⁵ This revolutionary community, created by Jesus' ministry, Yoder sees as unlike any other community ever created before or since.

Community

The church as community is central to Yoder's concept of how the church is to conceive itself. It was formed by God as a community that would continue on the ministry of Jesus to the world. To accomplish this purpose the church should be a voluntary community, a diverse community, and a community that lives in a distinct way.

³ Yoder, John Howard, *The Original Revolution; Essays on Christian Pacifism* (Scottsdale, Pa: Herald Press) 1971. Pg. 31

⁴ *Original Revolution* pg. 28

⁵ Yoder, John Howard, *The Christian Witness to the State* (Newton, KA: Faith and Life Press) 1964. Pg. 16

The society or community Jesus instituted is one based upon voluntary entrance. One cannot be born into it. Entrance to this community only comes through repentance and giving allegiance to God.⁶ There is no prerequisite other than belief in Jesus as the Saviour that enables entrance into the church. This also means that there is no other condition that can grant entrance into the church. A particular nationality, heritage, gender, or social status does not automatically allow or disallow membership in the church. Faith in Jesus as Lord is the only criteria giving entrance to the community of the church. Yoder sees the practice of believer's baptism as the initiation rite of the Christian church teaching this voluntary membership.⁷

Yoder also observes that Jesus instituted a racially, religiously, and socio-economically mixed community. Divisions such as Jew or Gentile, legalists or libertarians, rich or poor are not important within the church.⁸ They are overshadowed by the work of God through Christ creating one people out of all nations. Yoder calls this true unity or true internationalism. Just as there is no precondition other than faith that allows entry into the community of the church, there is no precondition that bars entry into the church. With this comes Yoder's view that no tradition or denominational barrier should separate the church. Within the church, tradition should not cause Christians to see each other as different or separate from one another. The greatest barrier has already been removed by Christ and their acceptance of Him as Lord. This does not require that all differences of tradition be abolished, simply that they should not cause division or conflict within the church.⁹ Yoder sees the truly voluntary and diverse nature of the church as something unique to the world. No other community is like the church in this having the capacity to truly see one another as equal regardless of any other factor other than common faith in Christ.

Another point of departure between the church and all other communities to Yoder is how

⁶ *Original Revolution* pg. 29

⁷ Yoder, John Howard, 'Thinking Theologically From a Free-Church Perspective' in *Doing Theology in Today's World*, ed. Woodbridge, John D., and Thomas Edward McComiskey, (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI) 1991. Pg. 252 Yoder recognized that there are different interpretations of the meaning and practice of baptism, such as infant baptism. His argument was that believer's baptism was the correct biblical model of the rite of baptism.

⁸ *Original Revolution* pg. 29

⁹ Yoder recognized that this would be a process and not easily done. Nonetheless, it is the calling to which the church is bound.

this community is called to live.

He [Jesus] gave them a new way to deal with offenders -- by forgiving them. He gave them a new way to deal with violence -- by suffering. He gave them a new way to deal with money -- by sharing it. He gave them a new way to deal with problems of leadership -- by drawing on the gift of every member, even the most humble. He gave them a new way to deal with a corrupt society -- by building a new order, not smashing the old. He gave them a new pattern of relationships between man and woman, between parent and child, between master and slave, in which was made concrete a radical new vision of what it means to be a human person. He gave them a new attitude toward the state and toward the 'enemy nation.'¹⁰

The church's way of living follows the example of Christ. Yoder sees this example as clearly that of pacifism, non-resistance to evil. "Nonresistance is right, in the deepest sense, not because it works, but because it anticipates the triumph of the Lamb that was slain."¹¹ Yoder sees pacifism as the course of action Jesus exemplified in His life and death. By its nature pacifism demands faith, which Yoder defines in part as the "willingness to accept the apparently ineffective path of obedience, trust in God for the results."¹² It may not be a pleasant or easy option, but pacifism is what Yoder sees as the only real option for the Christian.

The church can only realize this way of life, for Yoder, if three different elements are functioning. First, the church must be the church; it must focus on its message calling upon its members to live that message out. "We must proclaim to every Christian ... absolute non-resistance in discipleship and to abandonment of all loyalties which counter that obedience, including the desire to be effective immediately."¹³ This includes how Christians view other people. "The church must be a sample of the kind of humanity within which, for example, economic and racial differences are surmounted."¹⁴ Second, the church must call individuals

¹⁰ *Original Revolution* pg. 29

¹¹ *Original Revolution* pg. 64

¹² *Original Revolution* pg. 67

¹³ *Original Revolution* pg. 76 While Yoder uses the term non-resistance here the overall whole of his writings would be better defined as non-violence. Yoder speaks strongly in favour of non-violent movements such as those of Martin Luther King as living out the ethical example of Jesus in relation to evil. Non-resistance would be in accepting the practice and effects of evil without seeking to change or defend against that evil. Non-violence, the model I see in Yoder, is that of standing against what is evil by actions and words that do not do violence in return for any violence done by the evil being opposed.

¹⁴ Yoder, John Howard *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*. 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans) 1994.

to be reconciled with God. Calling people to find peace with God is the evangelism Yoder sees as real. It involves true repentance, which involves change of lifestyle. Third, the church must return to its first confession of faith, Christ is Lord. This means that the church recognizes and calls upon those responsible for the care of society to serve the true function of the state, keeping society stable and ordered.

This way of living, Yoder sees as impossible for all outside the church. "Christian ethics calls for behaviour which is impossible except by the miracles of the Holy Spirit."¹⁵ The calling upon the church is for the church only. It cannot be expected of individuals to live as Christians, neither of a surrounding culture. Yoder is adamant on this point. "Our vision of obedience cannot be tested by whether we can ask it of everyone."¹⁶

Christian faith is possible only on the grounds of repentance and forgiveness, only within the restoration of human community as a resource for experienced forgiveness and as a source of ethical counsel, only as it grows from a faith which relates to the meaning of God in the person of Christ.¹⁷

This last statement reveals a strong component of Yoder's position that the church functions as community. Only community fully enables the practicing of forgiveness and Christian living. In community individual members and the corporate church grow more faithful to God's calling of holiness by living out that calling practically in relationship with one another. It requires relationship with others to carry out the calling of not only living as the church but also as a Christian.

To Yoder, the church is a community of hope. This hope defies present frustrations but looks forward in confidence in God to the future goal, which gives its existence meaning.¹⁸ The church, while perhaps experiencing suffering, persecution or other negative occurrences, should not give up hope. The church can see in Jesus that their future is secure beyond the happenings of this world. This can embolden the church to carry out its present ministry despite what negative circumstances may come.

Pg. 154

¹⁵ *Original Revolution* pg. 121

¹⁶ *Original Revolution* pg. 122

¹⁷ *Original Revolution* pg. 123

¹⁸ *Original Revolution* pg. 56

Called

For Yoder, the church is called to become in reality what it has already been made to be by God through the ministry of Jesus. This means that the church acknowledges it does not display the fullness of the reality God has made it to be.

The summons is simply to live up to what a Christian -- or the church -- is when confessing that Christ is Lord ... The church is not, fully and genuinely, all of what it means to be the church; otherwise we should not have to call her to become that reality which in Christ she is supposed to be.¹⁹

The church should not deny its failures in wholly living out the calling of God upon it, as that call is not negated by failure. Positively, the church is defined by the calling of God. Negatively, the church is defined by what it is not, the world.²⁰

The church is completely a work of God. It did not begin with human beings, nor is humanity to set its agenda. Neither is the goal of the church, of human origin. Everything about the church, as it truly is, is all about God's purposes. God sets the church on its course, having given the calling to be His people.

We are not marching to Zion because we think that by our own momentum we can get there. But that is still where we are going. We are marching to Zion because, when God lets down from heaven the new Jerusalem prepared for us, we want to be the kind of persons and the kind of community that will not feel strange there.²¹

For Yoder God is the creator of the church and will bring the church to its completion. The church is about God.

The church is not just about displaying obedience to God in what they believe, but also in how they live. "The church is herself a society. Her very existence, the fraternal relations of her members, their ways of dealing with their differences and their needs are, or rather should be, a demonstration of what love means in social relations."²² The way of life for the church follows the calling of God as best exemplified in the life of Jesus Christ.

With this social dimension to the church, Yoder views the church as primarily a political

¹⁹ *Original Revolution* pg. 113-4

²⁰ *Original Revolution* pg. 114

²¹ *Original Revolution* pg. 165

²² *Christian Witness to the State* pg. 17

entity, a *polis*.²³ There is no doubt for him that the church must understand itself as a political body, as this is how he sees the New Testament speaking about the church. In being a political entity, this means in part, that the church must discern its nature and calling, as a community, in relation to its surrounding culture. The church finds its path in its culture by looking to all its members for insight. This is part of the political function and nature of the church.

Pacifism

A distinctive facet of Yoder's concept of the church is its pacifist nature. While he is certainly not the first theologian to suggest pacifism as a proper component of the Christian faith, his articulate endorsement of pacifism is one key aspect of what he is known for. Over his career Yoder wrote a great deal concerning the nature of Christian pacifism and against the just war theory.²⁴ Foundational to Yoder's understanding of the relationship of the church to its surrounding culture is his contention that the church is to be pacifistic in all its relationships.

The fundamental relationship Yoder sees pacifism relating to is not that of the church and its surrounding culture. It is in the relationship between the obedience of the church and effectiveness in implementing change.

Christian pacifism ... is one in which the calculating link between our obedience and ultimate efficacy has been broken, since the triumph of God comes through resurrection and not through effective sovereignty or assured survival.²⁵

The pacifism Yoder sees as the calling of the church is to be obedient to the ways and means of God. It is not a belief that all legitimate ends can be achieved without violence, but rather than when legitimate ends cannot be gained through legitimate means, those ends are willingly surrendered until such a time that they can again be claimed through means

²³ *Christian Witness to the State* pg.18

²⁴ It is impossible to give a complete description of Yoder's view of pacifism or of the arguments against just war theory that he gave. It must be sufficient here to state that both positions still have their proponents and the debate continues. Yoder did have a significant impact in that debate in the cause of supporting pacifism as the appropriate Christian stance and not simply irresponsible.

²⁵ *The Politics of Jesus* pg. 246

honouring to God.²⁶ Christian pacifism is something only for the church, because only they have a trust in God that allows it. It is only for Christians because only the church has the resources to live it out.

Yoder links pacifism closely to Christian faithfulness; it is part of what it means to be a Christian. This is because Yoder sees pacifism as part of the example of Jesus, whom the church takes as the ultimate example of how to live. Nancy Murphy summarizes Yoder's entire theological program, including his pacifism, as "the moral character of God is revealed in Jesus' vulnerable enemy love and renunciation of dominion. Imitation of Jesus in this regard constitutes a social ethic."²⁷ The example of Jesus, including his way of relating to the use of power, is for the church to live out.

Another aspect of Yoder's call to pacifism is his understanding of eschatology. His view of the world is that the real world is the world to come, not the world that currently is. The church is to reflect the world that is to come, while still relating to the world that is. That dynamic will be looked at in more detail in the following sections.

This description of Yoder's understanding and articulation of pacifism is not intended to be exhaustive or persuasive. There are many questions Yoder dealt with on this topic, such as whether a Christian can take up a vocation that may include the use of violence or force, such as a police officer. What is important to understand for Yoder is that pacifism is inseparable from authentic Christian living and witness. Whatever the church does and however it seeks to accomplish its tasks, pacifism marks that path defining what can and cannot be done.

Nature of the Surrounding Culture (Powers)

The relationship of the church to its surrounding culture occupies much of Yoder's writing. Yoder speaks not just of the church and how it should be, but also of the nature of the powers, forces that guide and shape culture. To hope to understand any relationship both sides must be viewed. Without understanding the structures (powers) of surrounding culture

²⁶ *The Politics of Jesus* pg. 244

²⁷ Murphy, Nancey and George F.R. Ellis, *On the Moral Nature of the Universe: Theology, Cosmology, and Ethics* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press) 1996 pg. 178

the church can err in its mission. "The concept structure functions to point to the patterns or regularities that transcend or precede or condition the individual phenomena we can immediately perceive."²⁸ For Yoder the terms structure, state, or powers are essentially synonymous, their particular use dependent upon the context of the issue he was speaking to.

In regards to his understanding of the true purpose of the powers Yoder is clear. These powers exist by the ordination of God to order society. They exist to provide social cohesion so the church can go about its work, bringing into greater clarity for all the kingdom of God. The powers will not create a ideal order, but rather carry a particular society between rebelliousness and orderliness to the standard of God.²⁹ Yoder points to Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2 as passages in Scripture teaching the state as God's instrument for the maintenance of order in society.³⁰

These powers are seen as invisibly determining human events; in biblical language *powers* would be roughly equivalent of the modern term *structures*, by which psychological and sociological analysts refer to the dimensions of cohesiveness and purposefulness which hold together human affairs beyond the strictly personal level, especially in such realms as that of the state or certain areas of culture. In short, the powers govern that realm which the Bible refers to as the *world* (*cosmos* in the Johannine writings, *aion houtos* according to Paul).³¹

These powers, still under the sovereignty of God, can rebel or obey. They cannot escape God's authority. "The function of the state in maintaining an ordered society is thereby a part of the divine plan for the evangelization of the world."³² The more stable the society provided by the powers, the more powerful a witness the church can have. The powers have a definite role within the God's plan of redemption, yet the message of redemption comes from God through the church, not any other agency of human endeavour or involvement.

²⁸ *The Politics of Jesus* pg. 140 On page 145 Yoder gives a list of analogies for the Powers, human traditions, the course of earthly life conditioned by the heavenly bodies, morality, fixed religious and ethical rules, the administration of justice and the ordering of the state, ... the state, politics, class, social struggle, national interest, public opinion, accepted morality, the ideas of decency, of democracy, ... the place of the clan or the tribe among primitive peoples, the respect for ancestors and the family ... [in] Chinese life, the Hindu social order ... the astrological unity of ancient Babel ..., the manifold moral tradition and codes of which moral life is full ..., the powers of race, class, state and *Volk*.

²⁹ *Christian Witness to the State* pg. 33-4

³⁰ *Christian Witness to the State* pg. 12

³¹ *Christian Witness to the State* pg. 8-9

³² *Christian Witness to the State* pg. 13

While the function of the powers is to provide a stable society for the church to go about its mission, it often fails in this because of their disobedience to God. While God created the powers as good, Yoder sees them as now fallen.³³ They are necessary, as humanity cannot exist without the structures of society. Yoder sees the New Testament as declaring the powers to have moved from being servants of humanity to seeking to be master. The powers seek to separate Christians from the love of God (Rom. 8:38), rule over the lives of those who live apart from God (Eph. 2:2), hold people in bondage (Col. 2:20), and teach people to follow their way as opposed to God's (Gal. 4:3).³⁴ Humanity cannot live without these powers or structures, yet cannot live well with them either as they do not enable human beings to live a free and loving life.

Yet, Yoder does not want to describe the powers as that which is or defines all of culture. The powers or culture which the church stands apart from is that which is self-glorifying or opposed to authentic human flourishing.³⁵ Culture is not an all or nothing term in the sense of being completely right or wrong, wholly rebellious or obedient to God. While the powers are fallen from their original design and purpose, they are not so corruptive that there is nothing good remaining.

Everything we call culture is both in some way created and creative and positive, and in other ways rebellious and oppressive. This is not a fifty/fifty mix, but a far more complex dialectical challenge, whereby we are called to exercise discernment.³⁶

Despite this fallen nature of the powers, they are still under the authority of God and are used by Him for His purposes. This does not mean God approves of all that the powers may do. They can, even while acting in alignment to God's purposes, be in disobedience to God's standard.

A given government is not mandated or saved or made a channel of the will of God; it is simply lined up, used by God in his ordering of the cosmos. It does not mean that what men in government do is good human behaviour. ... God did not approve

³³ *The Politics of Jesus* pg. 143

³⁴ *The Politics of Jesus* pg. 143

³⁵ Yoder, John Howard, Glen H. Stassen, and D.M. Yeager, *Authentic Transformation: A New Vision of Christ and Culture* ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press) 1996. Pg. 70

³⁶ *Authentic Transformation* pg. 85

morally of the brutality whereby Assyria chastised Israel (Isa. 10).³⁷

The powers are truly under the sovereignty of God, fully under His rule, yet are not so by their desire or choice.

God has not acted to remove the powers; they are necessary to His purposes, even if disobedient. He has acted to redeem them through the work of Jesus Christ. These powers cannot be removed, for without them Yoder says, humanity cannot exist.

Man's subordination to these Powers is what makes him human, for if they did not exist there would be no history nor society nor humanity. If then God is going to save man *in his humanity*, the Powers cannot simply be destroyed or set aside and ignored. Their sovereignty must be broken. This is what Jesus did, concretely and historically, by living among men a genuinely free and human existence.³⁸

The fallen nature of the powers is not something humanity must be resigned to endure. While they are rebellious in degree, that degree can be altered, for good or for ill. The responsibility of the church in this will follow in a later section.

Relationship of the Church to the Surrounding Culture

In looking at Yoder's view of the relationship of the church to its surrounding culture the structure from the previous chapter will be used with one addition. That addition is the nature of the church and the powers as of two different streams separated by the acknowledgement of Jesus Christ as Lord and obedience to Him. This shapes the church's understanding of its distinction from surrounding culture. This distinction allows for proper critique of its surrounding culture. The critique of the church, among other factors, will keep it in a minority status in the culture as well as making it unpopular within its culture. While the church should refuse to manage culture it still will bring concrete blessing to surrounding culture, as it is God's instrument to affect change in the world around it.

Two Aeons

Yoder speaks of two aeons, two realms conjoined together. The old realm is that of how

³⁷ *The Politics of Jesus* pg. 204

³⁸ *The Politics of Jesus* pg. 147

things were done before the ministry of Christ, essentially the way of the powers. God has brought the new into existence through the work of Christ. "The state did not change with the coming of Christ; what changed was the coming of the new aeon which proclaimed the doom of the old one."³⁹ Yoder uses the picture of the time in World War II between D-Day and V-Day, the time between the decisive stroke and final surrender to describe this dynamic. "Evil is potentially subdued, and its submission is already a reality in the reign of Christ, but the final triumph of God is yet to come."⁴⁰ This tension of living between the ages occupies much of Yoder's writing.

This distinction between the two aeons is of two different systems with two different purposes, though the external appearance of this might sometimes appear to coincide. It is of those who follow Christ (the old) and of those who do (the new).⁴¹ While in appearance similarity of action may happen between the two, the motive or purpose of each is quite different. "The present aeon is characterized by sin and centred on man; the coming aeon is the redemptive reality which entered history in an ultimate way in Christ."⁴² In individual circumstances the outward goal of the church and the powers may be the same, yet the motive and purpose of each is quite different. It should also be clearly understood, says Yoder, that there is a strong strand of New Testament teaching holding governments, all kinds of authority, as within the province of Satan's authority or powerful influence.⁴³

It must be understood that what Yoder sees Christ bringing through His ministry is not a new form of government for the church to institute. Rather Christ brings a new way of living in relationship to the powers, including the government, whatever its nature.⁴⁴ The revolution of Christianity is not in throwing off or overthrowing what authorities currently exist. What is revolutionary about the church, as created and made possible by the work of

³⁹ *The Original Revolution* pg. 62-3 The change seen by Yoder is not fully enacted because of the appearance of Christ. It must be chosen and lived out.

⁴⁰ *The Original Revolution* pg. 63-4

⁴¹ *The Original Revolution* pg. 116 Yoder also feels that the distinctions of laity and ordained are not useful for the church. Clericalism Yoder even views as a sign of the church accepting the standards of the old aeon or the state. *Christian Witness to the State* 17n.1

⁴² *Christian Witness to the State* pg. 9

⁴³ *The Politics of Jesus* pg. 195 Yoder sees this in the account of Jesus' temptation where Jesus does not challenge Satan's ability to give Him the kingdoms of the earth. Also Revelation 13, where the government is shown as persecuting believers in Jesus is an important passage to consider for Yoder.

⁴⁴ *The Original Revolution* pg. 58-9

Jesus, is a community that recognizes and accepts the powers that be, yet stays free of their desire in determining meaning and purpose for humanity.⁴⁵ The criteria the church is given for judging the powers are not for the purpose of revolting against them. Rather, they are to be used in judging the powers' faithfulness to the functions designed for them by God. Judging the validity of the powers' authority and judging the use of that authority as good or evil are two completely different things. It is the second to which the church is called to actively do, the first is to be rejected.

Also, for Yoder, the best way to contribute to the old aeon, that is in contributing to the powers' role to preserve society, is to display the new aeon.⁴⁶ By being faithful to its mission the church will seek only the best for all people by proclaiming and living out the truth, the gospel of Jesus Christ. The church has the capacity to be a more ordered community, than the powers can produce, one that shows the way God intends for human living.⁴⁷

With the church's call to be 'in the world, but not of the world' Yoder sees definite guidelines for how the church should relate to the powers of society.

The Christian is called not to obey the state, which would imply actually receiving from the state his moral guidance, but to be subject, which means simply that he shall not rebel or seek to act as if the state were not there. Whether he obeys the state or finds that his submission must be in the form of disobedience and accepting punishment for it, will depend on what the state asks of him.⁴⁸

Yoder calls this behaviour 'subordination', taking its root as from the word defining the same kind of action as God's ordering the powers. It speaks to putting allegiances in their proper place and perspective. The church owes all obedience to God first. Yet the powers rightly demand obedience as well. When there is conflict between the calling of God and the demands of the powers, the church must subordinate itself to the powers while staying obedient to God.

The conscientious objector who refuses to do what his government asks him to do, but still remains under the sovereignty of that government and accepts the penalties which it imposes, or the Christian who refuses to worship Caesar but still permits

⁴⁵ *The Politics of Jesus* pg. 200f

⁴⁶ *The Original Revolution* pg. 87

⁴⁷ *Christian Witness to the State* pg. 18

⁴⁸ *Christian Witness to the State* pg. 75

Caesar to put him to death, is being subordinate even though he is not obeying.⁴⁹

Both the authority of the powers and the authority of God are respected, even if the demands of the powers are not obeyed. This is subordination as understood by Yoder.

Now Yoder does see a difference in how the powers and the church function in completing their particular tasks. Yoder sees in the New Testament, “the necessity of orders and organization based on power in social relations. This is the result not first of God’s having willed that it be so, but only of human sin.”⁵⁰ The powers were not created due to sin, or because of sin. They function as they do now because of human sin. Coercion, violent action or other occasions of using power in structuring society is within the realm of the world outside of the church. Those within the church are not to use these methods to influence or shape those around them, whether individuals or an entire society. Yet, Yoder sees both as means of how God works to accomplish His purposes in the world.

Yoder has much to say about the difference between the Constantinian approach, the approach of the church seeking to shape, rule, or mould society from a position of, or allegiance with, those in power, and what he sees as the example of the New Testament, early church, and the Anabaptists. The Constantinian approach Yoder sees as the conquest of the world by the church brought about by the conquest of the church by the world.⁵¹ The surrounding culture becomes identified as Christian, as well as those within it. The old aeon is called the new, requiring then the support or approval of the church. This position, with its various shades, brings Yoder’s criticism.

Should we not therefore suggest that the error of the church in earlier days was not that she allied herself with the wrong power, ... but that she accepted the principle of sanctifying a given social order at all? Should we not question the readiness to establish a symbiotic relationship to every social structure?⁵²

Elsewhere, Yoder notes, “the claim [of Christianity] is not that there is immediately a new world regime which violently replaces the old: but rather the old and the new order exist

⁴⁹ *The Politics of Jesus* pg. 212

⁵⁰ *Christian Witness to the State* pg. 31

⁵¹ *The Original Revolution* pg. 69

⁵² *The Original Revolution* pg. 157

concurrently on different levels.”⁵³ Confusion of these two ways of doing and seeing things only affects the church negatively for Yoder. It only restrains the church from freely displaying the truth of the gospel. It never makes the culture Christian.

Finally, both aeons have their distinct settled endings.

The church points forward as the social manifestation of the ultimately triumphant redemptive work of God; the world, however, even though still rebellious, is brought into subjection to the kingship of Christ or the kingdom of the Son.⁵⁴

As both have their purpose, both have their outcome. The church points to the kingdom that is coming and the powers will be brought back into complete obedience.

This dual aeon reality affects how the church needs to understand its calling in how to influence and seek to shape society. Yoder sees this reality as important for the church to recognize, understand, and live in light of to be in keeping with its place in God’s redemptive plan.

Church distinct from Surrounding Culture

Earlier Yoder’s negative definition of the church was noted, that the church is not the world. This requires that the church understand itself as distinct from the culture surrounding it.⁵⁵ Part of this distinction comes from the manner in which both function. For example, Yoder sees the state, a part of the structure of any culture, not able to function as the church should. He cites that there was a strong belief in the 1920’s and 1930’s in North America that the state could function as the church, but that a careful study of the Bible does not bear this out.⁵⁶ This is because the state must use force and violence at times, something that Christians should never do, according to Yoder.⁵⁷

⁵³ *The Politics of Jesus* pg. 191

⁵⁴ *Christian Witness to the State* pg. 10

⁵⁵ For Yoder this includes the necessity for the church having structures that provide it an independent existence from the structures of the surrounding culture. The church is not to function as an arm of the state, or as simply another social club.

⁵⁶ *Christian Witness to the State* pg. 6

⁵⁷ The reason for the state needing to use violence is because of the consequence of the Fall. Fallen humanity requires the governing authorities to use violence or force at times to restrain further violence. Yoder has more to say about this, but that is not the focus of this paper. It is this pacifistic position, in part, which has garnered much criticism for Yoder. It is this position, though not specifically that of Yoder’s, which Niebuhr wrote off as being politically irrelevant in his book *Christ and Culture*.

When the distinction between the church and the surrounding culture is lost the message of the church is lost. What happens, in Yoder's opinion, is that the church begins to preach a message that everyone could possibly do, rather than preaching the gospel, which only God can enable Christians to do.

The church will teach ethics not for those who possess the power of the Holy Spirit and an enabling hope but for those whose Christianity is conformity. This excludes at the outset any possibility of putting Christian ethics in its true light and concludes by making consistent Christianity the 'prophetic calling' of a few, who may be useful if only they don't claim to be right.⁵⁸

One of these distinctive elements between church and surrounding culture is in the 'power' structure of the church compared to that of surrounding cultures. Yoder sees a tendency toward hierarchical structures outside the church, compared to the egalitarian essence of the Christian church.⁵⁹ Immediately, it must be noted Yoder's criticism for hierarchical structures within the church. Any distinction in status between laity and clergy, other than perhaps in the giftedness and calling of individuals, would be seen by Yoder as nothing less than Constantinian methodology at work in the church.

Church brings Critique to Surrounding Culture

Despite this minority status, the church can and must still bring the message of the gospel to the culture surrounding it. The objective of the church is to speak to its surrounding society because Christ is Lord over all. No powers or structures make similar claim. Because Christ is Lord, the church has a responsibility to speak to those outside their fellowship in hope of guiding or influencing individuals, and even the surrounding culture.⁶⁰ The church must do this because the structures that influence, shape and guide culture are under the authority of God and accordingly have a responsibility to fulfill their duty to Him. Also, the church can understand that ultimately these power are under God's authority making change possible, even if seemingly unlikely to human perception.

For Yoder, the manner of this 'witness to the state' is important. It must be a true

⁵⁸ *The Original Revolution* pg. 82

⁵⁹ *Christian Witness to the State* pg. 18

⁶⁰ *Christian Witness to the State* pg. 21

representation of the church's clear conviction. To do otherwise would not be honest. The proclamation of the church in how to live must be consistent with how it already behaves. No church should speak to issues beyond their experience in practice. If the church cannot demonstrate they live out their principles and beliefs concerning an issue, it should not call others to do the same. This would only discredit the church's witness, which then discredits the gospel message. This harms the central purpose of the church, to faithfully reveal the gospel so that people might accept it as truth. Finally, the church should only speak when it has something of value to say. Speaking for the sake of continuing to feel heard or for any other reason is of no value. "Only such matters as can be clearly identified by the church as presenting a clear moral challenge or abuse can justify their being given more than perfunctory attention."⁶¹ The critique of the church is to be focused rather than speaking about any or every issue available for critique.

The Christian speaks not of how to describe, and then to seek to create the ideal society, but of how the state can best fulfill its responsibilities in a fallen society. The Christian witness will therefore always express itself in terms of specific criticisms, addressed to given injustices in a particular time and place, and specific suggestions for improvements to remedy the identified abuse. This does not mean that if the criticisms were heard and the suggestions put into practice, the Christian would be satisfied; rather, a new and more demanding set of criticisms and suggestions would then follow. There is no level of attainment to which a state could rise, beyond which the Christian critique would have nothing more to ask; such an ideal level would be none other than the kingdom of God.⁶²

These specific criticisms must be practical ones, for Yoder. They must be conceivable for the society to undertake for the purpose of eliminating some injustice. The church cannot make critiques that demand a perfect society because that society is the kingdom of God.

Another critique the church brings is of the surrounding culture's values and hopes.

When we confess that Christ is the Light of the world this implies a critical attitude toward other pretended 'lights'. When we confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, this commits us to a relative independence of other loyalties which we would otherwise feel it normal to be governed by.⁶³

The church, in faithfulness to its Lord, speaks against the hopes of the culture surrounding it.

⁶¹ *Christian Witness to the State* pg. 22

⁶² *Christian Witness to the State* pg. 32

⁶³ *The Original Revolution* pg. 117

For example, one value of surrounding cultures, due to their influence upon them by the powers, is that having power is better than not having it. But as Yoder sees it, “the Christian community is the only community whose social hope is that we need not rule because Christ is Lord.”⁶⁴ This can speak to society where power is fundamental to having one’s goals or priorities come about. The church does not need to rule surrounding culture because it knows it serves the ultimate ruler already, whose way is not the way of coercive dominance. This is one example of how Yoder sees the church carrying out its task of critiquing the values of its surrounding culture.

Bringing criticisms to the values, direction or decisions of the surrounding culture are important for the sake of that society. “There are times when a society is so totally controlled by an ideology that the greatest need is that someone simply identify a point where he can say a clear no in the name of his loyalty to a higher authority.”⁶⁵ Pointing out a culture’s idols must be a function of the church. The church can, because of the separation they have created, objectively identify what a culture holds as their god(s). The church is the one agency that knows the true meaning and purpose for the powers. Therefore, the church must evaluate the powers according to that purpose.⁶⁶ Again, as Yoder says elsewhere, “naming and denouncing the Powers’ rebellion is prerequisite to becoming able to project the direction in which the direction of restoration would lie.”⁶⁷

The cultural stance of the Christian church according to the New Testament will therefore not be a matter of seeking for a strategy to be applied uniformly, either accepting or rejecting (or pardoning or transforming) all of ‘culture’ in the same way. It will and should proceed precisely by denying such a global character to culture, and will move rather by discrimination.⁶⁸

This discrimination can be described using different categories in which the church places or treats aspects of culture. These categories would include outright rejection, acceptance within clear limits, those which the church gives new meaning or motivation to, those which the church strips of authority to claim autonomous truth or value, those which the church has

⁶⁴ *The Original Revolution* pg. 125-6

⁶⁵ *The Original Revolution* pg. 162

⁶⁶ *Christian Witness to the State* pg. 16

⁶⁷ *Authentic Transformation* pg. 76

⁶⁸ *Authentic Transformation* pg. 69

itself created and those which Yoder sees the Peace churches having created.⁶⁹ The critique of the church is not an all or nothing approach. It neither summarily condemns or praises surrounding culture. It views culture as a mix of justice and corruption, of the powers being in ways both obedient and rebellious to their God appointed duties.

Church is Minority in Surrounding Culture

Another facet of Yoder's position concerning the church is that it will be a minority position in whatever culture it finds itself. While God desires that all people would be saved, Yoder views reality as being that the majority will not accept the gospel message of Jesus Christ. Regardless of what the culture around may think itself to be, the church, those faithful to Christ, will find themselves as the few among the many. "To recognize that the church is a minority is not a statistical but a theological observation."⁷⁰ The witness to the social order surrounding the church is not dependent upon the numerical size of the church. Likewise, the responsibility of the church to witness by proclamation and deed is not dependent upon the size of the church nor of the amount of influence or respect it might have within their surrounding culture.⁷¹

For some this may appear as a position of weakness, something the church should seek to avoid. For Yoder, this position is one to take joy in.

Should we not recognize repentantly that we ought never have wanted to Christianize the world in this way, from the top down, through the prestige of governmental backing and wide social acceptance? Now that the church has become weak may we not recognize with joy her calling is to be weak?⁷²

This weakness is weakness only according to the values of the powers. The church takes its strength from its position with God as His people.

Existing as a minority in its culture is something Yoder sees the church needing to recognize as its permanent state and to rejoice in that. It frees the church from a number of temptations that could negatively influence the gospel being given its full reign. It also frees

⁶⁹ *Authentic Transformation* pg. 69

⁷⁰ *The Original Revolution* pg. 122

⁷¹ *Christian Witness to the State* pg. 23

⁷² *The Original Revolution* pg. 122-3

surrounding culture from identifying itself as Christian or at least from the church condoning that identification.

Church is unpopular\threat to Surrounding Culture

As the people of God, the church carries on the ministry of Jesus including the proclamation concerning the meaning of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Part of the ministry of Jesus, to Yoder, was bringing victory over the powers that rule culture.⁷³ The church must declare this message to its culture. This places the church in a position of being a challenge to the very powers that guide and structure their culture. What this requires of the church is moral discernment to see what needs to be challenged in its culture and how to go about this properly.

In the manner of the prophets of the Old Testament, the church takes up the role of those who are cut off from the surrounding society by their loyalty to God. Yet, the irony is that this loyalty to God by the church shows real concern for those around them, even though they may be condemned by them.⁷⁴ It should not surprise Christians, says Yoder, that when they speak out they find themselves taking what amounts to the unpopular side in their culture. It is because their foundations for looking at things will often be contrary to 'popular opinion'.

For Yoder, hostility comes to the church from surrounding culture for much more than Christians thinking differently than the culture surrounding it. The reason has to do with our Saviour Himself.

The cross of Christ was God's overcoming evil with good. The cross of the Christian is then no different; it is the price of our obedience to God's love toward all others in a world ruled by hate. Such unflinching love for friend and foe alike will mean hostility and suffering for us, as it did for him.⁷⁵

By staying loyal to the calling of God, as Jesus did, the church will undergo the same kind of treatment Jesus did.

This loyalty to God and to His gospel is the primary reason Yoder sees as why the church is seen as a threat to surrounding culture. In being faithful to its mission the church will

⁷³ This shows Yoder's understanding of atonement being of the Christus Victor model.

⁷⁴ *The Original Revolution* pg. 61

⁷⁵ Yoder, John Howard, 'Living the Disarmed Life', http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Howard_Yoder

examine all situations through the lens of the gospel, as opposed to that of its surrounding culture. Yoder sees Hendrik Berkhof's words as superior to his own on this point.

All resistance and every attack against the gods of this age will be unfruitful, unless the church herself is resistance and attack, unless she demonstrates in her life and fellowship how men can live freed from the Powers. ... Clairvoyant and warning words and deeds aimed at state or nation are meaningful only insofar as they spring from a church whose inner life is itself her proclamation of God's manifold wisdom to the "Powers in the air."⁷⁶

This will lead to the church calling into question values that the surrounding culture may hold quite dear, yet are still in opposition to God. "This messianic self-consciousness on the part of the church looks most offensive to the proponents of a modern world view, but it is what we find in the Bible."⁷⁷ This is no attitude or position of withdrawal from culture but an outright confrontation with the very structures that shape culture and thus with those under their dominance. The attack and demonstration of victory over the powers has done by Christ. The church exists to make this continually clear to all those still under the rule of the powers. This is the nature of the hostility of the church towards the powers, to demonstrative of the victory of Christ over the powers and the veracity of that claim. Part of this claim is simply that 'Christ is Lord', as opposed to the powers that claim that status for themselves. The church finds itself in the position of being against a culture so that it can seek the best for that culture, especially for those who suffer because of how that culture currently is.

Church refuses to Manage Surrounding Culture

Managing surrounding culture, is to Yoder, a horrible mistake the church embarked upon through the occasion afforded it by Constantine. While he mourns the choice the church made, he is not unsympathetic to the reasons why the church did so. In following the path afforded by Constantine the church became or tried to be something else other than its true calling.

Since Constantine, the 'something else' that the church as been trying to be instead of the church, instead of the beginning of a new kind of human relations, has been to

⁷⁶ *The Politics of Jesus* pg. 151 quoting Berkhof, Hendrik, *Christ and the Powers* (Scottsdale, Herald Press) 1962. Pg. 30

⁷⁷ *The Original Revolution* pg. 83

be the soul of the existing society. The church has felt she needed to provide religious resources for the morality of Everyman, and it was largely the accommodations necessary to meet that standard which she found legitimized war and violence. It was assumed that if Christians did not take management responsibility for society, there was no one else who could do it and the world would fall apart.⁷⁸

The responsibility of the church is simply to be the church, to manage itself in being faithful. "In the face of the challenges put to the church, the key of her success in witness and faithfulness will be her maintaining her own identity."⁷⁹ In maintaining its identity as the church, as opposed to a satellite of the powers, the freedom of the church is retained.

The freedom of the Christian, or of the church, from needing to invest his best effort of the effort of the Christian community, in obtaining the capacity to coerce others, and exercising and holding on to his power, is precisely the key to the creativity of the unique Christian mission in society.⁸⁰

By being the church, different solutions to social problems can arise. This is because the outlook and foundation of alternative solutions and how to carry out that alternative can freely occur. The church can embark on whatever path God casts it on in the surrounding culture.

Yoder rejects any notion that the message of the church, the gospel, should be confused as simply a plan for bettering society. He sees this as one of the great temptations for the church. It comes from a number of factors, including, the delusions that we can truly know the consequences of our actions, we are adequately informed concerning all we need to know in bringing our goals to fruition, and that moving towards our goals is automatically morally right.⁸¹ When the church seeks to manage society or the course of history it always seems to turn out differently than expected. The message of the church is first of all for those within the church so that they will grow in conformity to its content and purposes.

Part of Yoder's reason for this position is that he sees no foundation for any particular form of government within the Christian message. The model he sees is of Christians accepting the current situation and then seeking to speak to those powers to correct and guide

⁷⁸ *The Original Revolution* pg. 127

⁷⁹ *The Original Revolution* pg. 149

⁸⁰ *The Original Revolution* pg. 178

⁸¹ *The Politics of Jesus* pg. 235

towards obedience to God.⁸² The church is not to rule over but subordinate itself to the powers that exist around them secure in the knowledge that they serve the One who is in authority over those powers.

This is not to say that Yoder sees the exercise of any kind of power as beyond proper Christian behaviour.

If the disciple of Jesus Christ chooses not to exercise certain kinds of power, this is not simply because they are powerful; for the Powers as such, power in itself, is the good creation of God. He chooses not to exercise certain types of power because, in a given context, the rebellion of the structure of a given particular power is so incorrigible that at the time the most effective way to take responsibility is to refuse to collaborate.⁸³

This calls for discernment on the part of the church. God is working within the world, including through the powers, and the task of the church is to know how He is working.⁸⁴ When God is at work through the powers the church can and should join in, though not in ways that identify them with abuses of the power. This requires evaluating the methods used by the powers as well as the goal. If both fit with the call of God, the church can join in with those specific situations.

Church brings concrete blessing to Surrounding Culture

By being distinct from the surrounding culture, though not separate from it, the church is freed to bring concrete blessing to its culture. The model Yoder proposes for the church is not irresponsible or irrelevant to its society, but intrinsically interested in bringing the very best to that society. That best is revealed by the church's way of living out and proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The church calls individuals to accept Jesus as Lord and the society to see that how God has instructed people to live is actually what is best. The different style of life that the church exhibits, says Yoder, will not only bring blessings to surrounding culture, but even has the capacity to turn it to obedience to God.⁸⁵

One of these blessings is the church's model of how to regard all people. By viewing all

⁸² *Christian Witness to the State* pg. 41

⁸³ *The Politics of Jesus* pg. 158

⁸⁴ *The Politics of Jesus* pg. 159

⁸⁵ *The Original Revolution* pg. 30

people as equal in value regardless of any prerequisite, the church shows what Yoder calls true internationalism. An example of a group who can accept all others as equally valuable and respectable can only be found, says Yoder, in the church acting as it should. There is no place for boundaries to be placed upon one group of people against another. In the church, barriers that divide humanity, whether geographic, social, economic, racial, political, or of gender are torn down.

Christian unity is the true internationalism, for it posits and proclaims a unification of mankind whose basis is not some as yet unachieved restructuring of political sovereignties but as already achieved transformation of vision and community.⁸⁶

God's purpose through the church was the "creation of a society unidentifiable with any local, national, or ethnic solidarities at any time."⁸⁷ By viewing and acting towards all people in this way, the church will practically exhibit a tangible difference than that of its surrounding culture. That difference will bless not only the individuals given greater regard by the church, but also the surrounding culture by showing there is a group who can live out more fully that ideal.

Some other practical forms of positively interacting with surrounding culture, for Yoder, are evangelistic activity and serving the needy.⁸⁸ Yoder understands both these activities as necessary. They are not to be done apart from each other, but are not to be done for the sake of each other.⁸⁹ Evangelism, properly understood, is an invitation to discipleship.⁹⁰ It needs to include the call to non-resistance, commitment to God and service to Him. Serving the needy is also mandatory for the church. Yoder sees biblical instruction for the church to care for the needy in society, pictured in the widow, orphan, stranger and enemy. The church in displaying love and concern for these, displays the gospel. While the society around may demonstrate love and concern to a degree, Yoder sees the church called to a higher level than

⁸⁶ *The Original Revolution* pg. 130 In the same paragraph Yoder turns this around to declare that 'Christian internationalism is the true unity'. This means the church understanding itself beyond any boundary or barrier. Nationalism, the choice of one nation over against another Yoder views as a form of nothing less than idolatry. *Christian Witness to the State* 15

⁸⁷ *Christian Witness to the State* pg. 10

⁸⁸ *Christian Witness to the State* pg. 17

⁸⁹ Park, Joon-Sik 'As You Go: John Howard Yoder as a Mission Theologian'

<http://www.goshen.edu/mqr/pastissues/july04park.html>

⁹⁰ Yoder, John H., 'Explorations of the Issue of Evangelism in Contemporary Debate', memorandum, Sept. 2, 1968 pg. 16.

the culture itself would ever be.

To contribute to the surrounding culture, the church must act in ways that fit with the calling and purpose of God. How the church does things is as important as what it does for Yoder. He feels that, as in the past with such institutions as schools and hospitals, the church should continue to be a creative force within society, bringing through concrete measures the message of the church, the gospel of Jesus Christ.⁹¹ Whether through institutions or caring for the needs of individuals, the church is called to respond to the needs it sees around it.

The gospel message is more than a message of reconciliation from God to humanity.

It is clear that the good news announced to the world has to do with the reign of God among men in all their interpersonal relations, and not solely with the forgiveness of sins or the regeneration of individuals ... What was wrong with the social gospel of two generations ago was not that it was social, but that it lacked certain dimensions of the gospel.⁹²

For surrounding culture the church brings a message that deals with the problems and issues of today, as well as the issues of eternity. Without addressing both, the church fails to be faithful to the full message of the gospel.

Another concrete blessing the church brings to its surrounding culture is acting as judge or critic of the powers. By being separate from the surrounding culture the church can more objectively and faithfully critique the actions of those who make decisions that affect society or the direction or values of that society. Objectivity to judge the powers of surrounding culture is only possible, says Yoder, for Christians. "For only the Christian (and not many Christians at that) can combine forgiveness (not holding the other's sins against him), with repentance (the willingness to see one's own sin)."⁹³ All others are in some way blinded due to their own selfish intent or desires.

This 'prophetic function' of bringing the gospel message and its implications to bear upon the surrounding culture, brings not only the benefit of a truthful voice, but also of the only possible effective one for true positive change. Yoder thinks that the "prophetic function of the church, properly interpreted, is more effective against injustice than getting

⁹¹ *Christian Witness to the State* pg. 19

⁹² *Christian Witness to the State* pg. 23

⁹³ *The Original Revolution* pg. 79

into the political machinery.”⁹⁴ This prophetic function can provide instruction to the surrounding society about the temptations of power and the reality of sin. Yet Yoder’s emphasis is not in pointing this out to those outside the church first, but to begin by admitting the temptations of power to those within.⁹⁵ By not claiming to be perfect, yet still pointing to a better way, the church can bring a message of truth concerning power to their surrounding culture that may be listened to. The goal is not to come across as perfect, rather as those who have the same struggles, but have found a better way of living with power through the calling of God within the community of the church.

It should also be recognized that Yoder sees a distinction between the standard the church holds itself to and that to which it holds society. This is because only Christians can reasonably be held to the standards of the gospel and to accountability to their Christian community. Yoder does not see how those who are not Christians can be held responsible to fulfill what only Christians can do. Without the enabling power of the Holy Spirit and the fellowship of the church living out Christian ethics is impossible. Larger society can only be held to an ethic of justice.⁹⁶ This is not a distinction in what is necessary for salvation, only of what can reasonably be expected behaviour of those outside the church.

One temptation Yoder warns against in seeking to bless society is insisting or expecting a direct correlation between the church’s faithfulness and their effectiveness in positively changing their surrounding culture. Thinking in this way, for Yoder, denies the possibility of persecuted churches being seen as faithful.⁹⁷ Along with this temptation is that of seeing the church’s role as being only to encourage society to be better. Yoder sees betterment of a society as a side benefit of a faithful church, but not the primary purpose for the church.⁹⁸ The church is called to be faithful and contend with whatever changes that may make in their surrounding culture, whether positive or negative.

⁹⁴ *The Original Revolution* pg. 84

⁹⁵ *Christian Witness to the State* pg. 18

⁹⁶ *Christian Witness to the State* pg. 29, 23

⁹⁷ *The Original Revolution* pg. 126 The nations he cites are India, Indonesia, China and Japan. Today we might speak of churches in the Middle Eastern Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia or southern Sudan. Historically, the church has often grown in places where persecution has been great.

⁹⁸ *Christian Witness to the State* pg. 13

Church is God's Instrument for change in Surrounding Culture

In Jesus Christ, God acted, not just for the redemption of humanity, but also for the powers over humanity as well. The church, in continuing the ministry begun by Jesus, promotes what He has done so that change in people and in the powers can happen. The church is God's agent of declaring the change made available by the ministry of Jesus.

While the church is God's primary tool for this redemptive change, the surrounding culture may not listen. Yoder states, "New Testament moral thought began by facing the fact that we live in a world which most of the time does not listen to all that Christians have to say and some of the time will listen to nothing."⁹⁹ The mission of the church is not to force surrounding culture to listen, but to faithfully provide an alternative, one lived out by the church. The responsibility of making society listen is not the church's. The church's responsibility is to live in such a way as to have a voice worth listening to.

Now this should not be understood that the church must live differently because it seeks to have an alternative voice. "The obligation to refuse conformity is independent of the capacity to project ... better solutions."¹⁰⁰ The church is not to be different simply to have a voice, but to be conformed to the calling of God upon it. In conforming to that calling it will be default witness to those around. "The voluntary subjection of the church is understood as a witness to the world."¹⁰¹ This creates a voice for the church to those around, whether to individuals or the surrounding culture, including the powers.

This voice has purpose, but not to enforce or demand Christian principles be lived out by the surrounding culture. "Perhaps the best description of the effect of Christian proclamation on the powers would be to say that it constrains them to be modest."¹⁰² Yoder sees it as reality that the effectiveness of the church's witness upon the powers as fairly minimal. "The fact that the world to which we speak is in rebellion guarantees that the Christian social critique can never lead too far. The world can be challenged, at the most, on one point at a time, to take one step in the right direction."¹⁰³

⁹⁹ *The Original Revolution* pg. 124-5

¹⁰⁰ *The Original Revolution* pg. 163

¹⁰¹ *The Politics of Jesus* pg. 190

¹⁰² *The Original Revolution* pg. 148

¹⁰³ *Christian Witness to the State* pg. 39

While Yoder's tone seems pessimistic concerning the overall effectiveness of the church, change is still seen as by him as possible. When change happens that a once rebellious aspect of culture has been overcome, that aspect can then be participated in and even used for possible further change by the church. Yoder thinks that the church should actually be the most creative force in using 'good' aspects of culture for the betterment of humanity, the purpose of culture and the powers.¹⁰⁴ This is another place where discernment is important. For what can be negative in certain instances can be positive in others depending upon a whole range of factors. Yoder uses the theatre as an example of this, "in particular settings, Christians have rejected the theatre; in others theatre has served the gospel and the church. This is not inconsistency but concrete situational discernment."¹⁰⁵ In relating to the surrounding culture the church can creatively, with discernment, use elements of what surrounds them for the purposes of the gospel. Yet, Yoder is careful to be clear that this process of using elements of culture is not done in ways that dilutes the gospel message. Paul's display of modifying his approach to presenting the gospel dependent upon his circumstances can serve as a useful example for the church.¹⁰⁶

What Yoder sees as the goal of the church comes from the example of Jesus. The death of Jesus showed that God seeks to bring change through that of *agape* love, through sacrificial giving rather than through dominance. The cross was not effective in changing the overall society of Jesus' day nor was just in its outcome, yet it showed a willingness to suffer for the sake of obedience. The cross was not a defeat as shown by the resurrection. God honoured Christ's obedience.¹⁰⁷

Yoder's view of the church needing to not look at effectiveness but rather faithfulness does not negate a view that evil will ultimately be defeated. His view is that the agent of change for ultimate justice and good is not the church, rather is God Himself, acting through whatever means He wishes, including the church.

¹⁰⁴ *Authentic Transformation* pg. 71

¹⁰⁵ *Authentic Transformation* pg. 86

¹⁰⁶ Two passages stand out as showing Paul's principles for sharing the gospel. 1 Cor. 9:19-23 where Paul states his adaptation to the people he desires to have accept the gospel, though not being unfaithful to it. Also, Acts 17:18-34, where Paul uses culturally relevant material, the altars and poets, to present the gospel in a form more easily understood, and thus acceptable, to his hearers.

¹⁰⁷ *The Original Revolution* pg. 59

Just as has been the case ever since the patriarchs, and most notably at Christ's cross, the task of obedience is to obey and the responsibility of bringing about victory is God's alone. ... The Christian's responsibility for defeating evil, is to resist the temptation to meet it on its own terms. To crush the adversary is to be vanquished by him because it means accepting his standards.¹⁰⁸

Conclusion to Yoder's view of church and culture

Yoder's thought concerning the position of the church towards its surrounding culture is complex. He denies his position as one of withdrawal from surrounding culture, but rather that of selective interaction. This selective interaction is based upon the church's call to faithfulness to God shown in faithfulness to the gospel message of Jesus Christ. The selection is not about ignoring aspects of culture, but of how to interact with particular aspects.

Methodology of Yoder

While not seeking to systematize as a theologian, Yoder still has a definite methodology in his claims and in how he goes about making those claims.

Yoder does not see his position concerning the meaning of the gospel to be the sole meaning. While he states his position strongly, it is intended as a corrective, an addition to the church's understanding of the gospel.¹⁰⁹ He does not condemn other emphases such as evangelism to offer liberation from anxiety or guilt, or aiding people from intellectual confusion in life by giving good doctrine.¹¹⁰ The gospel message can deal with the problems of fear of death, help in getting a job or the need for acceptance. It should also include the call of commitment as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Yoder's purpose is to give a corrective to existing understandings of the gospel, not create any new ones. For example, Yoder desires that the church see the gospel as meeting the needs that were in Jesus' time, "the judgment of God upon the present order and the imminent promise of another one."¹¹¹ This does not supersede other existing understandings, rather is to correct or be included among the

¹⁰⁸ *The Original Revolution* pg. 66

¹⁰⁹ *The Original Revolution* pg. 18

¹¹⁰ *The Original Revolution* pg. 32

¹¹¹ *The Original Revolution* pg. 18

understandings of other traditions.

He is critical, however, of a number of positions that he sees as antagonistic to the intent of the church as created by God and as revealed in the Bible. He does not see his referencing the Bible as in the form of a fundamentalist frame of mind, taking things with only a simplistic literalism, but one that takes in the history of the Christian community's understanding of it as well. Yoder seeks to refute systems or 'grids', such as H.R. Niebuhr's¹¹². He sees systems as not very helpful for the church in understanding the will of God for the church.¹¹³ Theology's purpose is to serve the church's need in answering questions that arise through their attempt to understand and live out the gospel in their surrounding culture.

His concern, as a scholar, is to make the will of God clear to the church, which he sees as the purpose of Christian scholarship.

If the total effect of the scholar's reasoning and research ... is to make it impossible to know clearly what God wills, then a Christian scholar has either not been faithful or not been competent in the exercise of that ministry, or has not yet finished the job.¹¹⁴

His intent is to write for the whole church, not merely the 'Peace churches', of God's will for the church. His methodology to this end is to show what he believes the will of God is from Scripture, though he also uses Anabaptist resources.

Yoder deals with specific issues concerning the relationship of church and culture in his writings. He was not interested in creating a system that would categorize everything. This was not the purpose he saw for theology. Theology, again, is to make the gospel practical in each situation it is brought into contact with by the church. Without practice, Yoder would see even the best description of the church as ineffectual.

Instead, each setting, each event, each relationship will open for us a set of options or challenges, where we shall need to decide how to love our enemies, how to feed the hungry, how to keep our promises, how to make the earth be fruitful, how to celebrate community, how to remember our heritage ... The challenge "what will you do about this value we call culture?" far from helping us to be responsible, is something we are freed from, by the concreteness with which the Torah and the

¹¹² Niebuhr, H. Richard, *Christ and Culture*, (New York, NY: Harper and Row, Publishers) 1951

¹¹³ *Authentic Transformation* pg. 84

¹¹⁴ *Authentic Transformation* pg. 72

Kingdom message of Jesus describe our path.¹¹⁵

Conclusion

John Howard Yoder's view of the relationship between church and surrounding culture is founded upon a number of principles from his Anabaptist heritage, particularly pacifism. His pacifism shapes the nature of how the church should interact, not just with the powers, but also in all relationships. The foundation for pacifism Yoder sees coming from the life of Jesus and the history of Israel. Thus Yoder could title his book *The Politics of Jesus*, for Yoder sees in the gospels Jesus very involved with His surrounding culture.

This involvement is to be continued by the church. The church will be distinct from its surrounding culture because of its distinctive message, the gospel. By following the gospel, the church will bring a critique to the messages of its surrounding culture, at times praising or approving, other times criticizing, even condemning the practices and values of its surrounding culture. The critiquing of the surrounding culture by the church will make it unpopular to many, making the church a minority in its culture. From the pacifistic nature of the church, not because of minority status, the church refuses to manage or dominate its culture. This does not rule out the church as an effective agent of change and blessing in its culture.

Yoder calls upon the church to take seriously the political example of Jesus from His ministry. This example is what Yoder seeks to define and communicate to the church so that it can be put into action. By exhibiting faithfulness to the example of Jesus, Yoder sees the church as faithful to God and a blessing to its surrounding culture, regardless of what kind of response the surrounding culture gives to the church's example.

¹¹⁵ *Authentic Transformation* pg. 89

Chapter Two - Stanley Hauerwas

The writings and person of Stanley Hauerwas provoke strong response. He has written on various ethical issues, including medical, business and social topics. It is for his theological ethics views that he is most famous, except perhaps for his personality and style of writing. His theology has been called sectarian, tribalistic, and even un-American. Depending upon the context of the labels he probably would not mind this. In general though, he would see these as great misunderstandings of his position, and even more applicable to the positions of his critics.

These critical labels come from both his theological position and style of dialogue concerning the relationship between the church and its surrounding culture. Despite the criticisms that Hauerwas receives, he gives to the church important insights. His writings on the relationship between the church and its surrounding culture are important to understand. They provide, I believe, positive instruction to the people of the church on how to function within the culture they find themselves in.

To understand Hauerwas' position his definition of church and its calling must be laid out. This requires that his definition of culture or the powers surrounding the church must also be clarified. Only then can the relationship between the two, be understood both in their separation and interaction. In this chapter, Hauerwas' concept of the church, of culture, and their relationship will be described. Following will come some description of Hauerwas' methodology. This order of presentation will be repeated as in the previous chapter on Yoder for easier reference.

The Church

Many different definitions of church are used today. Defining church can be like defining God. Church can refer to a building, an affiliation, a group of people, a denomination, a historical movement, and more.

In thinking of the church, Hauerwas has definite aspects in mind through his writings. He writes prolifically of what he believes the church is, what it is not, of what the church should be and do, and what it should not. It is impossible to speak of the nature of the church in

Hauerwas' thought without considering its calling and its practice. As will be more fully described, Hauerwas sees the church as a social ethic, as the body of Jesus Christ conforming to His gospel. One cannot separate, says Hauerwas, ethics from theology, the believing church from the practicing church.

Another facet of the church's nature is that the church is Christ's. He is the authority over the church. It is not to come under the whims or tastes of those who are a part of it. The calling and commands of God lead the church. Also, just as people do not rule over the church, so too individual people do not form the church. Rather individuals are brought into the church, into the community of God's disciples. As God's, those within the church are to submit to God's leading in all things, in what to believe and how to live.

Both belief and action are important for Hauerwas, though actions are much more prominent in his description of the proper life of the church. "We are not Christians because of what we believe, but because we have been called to be disciples of Jesus."¹ Belief in Jesus is important to Hauerwas. It is the starting place for the journey of discipleship, but belief alone is as an incomplete description of the requirements of living as a Christian. The church is made up of those who are pursuing discipleship, not those who merely declare their belief in Jesus.

It must be remembered that salvation for Hauerwas is primarily social, rather than personal or spiritual in the sense of merely future, an eternity in Heaven. The Christian life is one that is learned in community, rather than through an individual's own personal pursuit of holiness. Salvation is learned and developed through interaction with others. "To become a disciple is not a matter of a new changed self-understanding, but rather to become part of a different community with a different set of practices."² In a community that truly seeks truth and salvation there is freedom not to be perfect while learning how to live out the mission God has given to His church. Without community salvation cannot truly be experienced.

Community

¹ Hauerwas, Stanley, *After Christendom: How the Church Is to Behave If Freedom, Justice and a Christian Nation Are Bad Ideas*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press) pg. 107

² *After Christendom* pg. 107

One of the hallmarks of Hauerwas' writing is his persistent call for the church to understand itself as a community. For Hauerwas, the church cannot be a group of individuals who meet together on occasion. The church is not primarily for the individual.³ The church is a community following after the heart and plan of God. It should be noted that Hauerwas, while admitting his Methodist roots and adherence, does not consider himself to be writing theology for Methodists or for any particular denomination, strand or tradition. He sees himself as part of and writing for the whole community of the church, for all Christians. He sees himself as a truly catholic theologian. It is because of this that the sectarian charges from fellow theologians against him distress or amuse him. Advocating a particular tradition is not a problem, for Hauerwas, unless it divides the community the church is called to be.

God's plan for the church requires it to see itself as community says Hauerwas. Not simply because that is how God has fashioned the church to function in community, but because the mission of the church demands it. As will be seen in Hauerwas' assessment of the church's mission, the members of the church must aid one another in that mission. The church cannot be faithful to its calling without existing in community. This requires that the church develop relationships inherent in true community, rather than of separate individuals who loosely form a group. Hauerwas even states that the "overriding political task of the church is to be the *community* of the cross".⁴ While this already shades into the mission of the church, the emphasis on community forms the core of his belief on what the church must be.

The church is also a community that can only be joined through personal choice. The church is made of people who have chosen to accept the truthfulness of the story of God, made clear first of all through Jesus Christ, but also through the church faithfully following that story.⁵ One cannot be part of the church of Jesus Christ through any other means. No one is a Christian by default because of parental choices, cultural identification, or anything except by personal acceptance that what the church presents of God and Jesus Christ is truth. That acceptance, again, is not simply affirmation of the statement 'Christ is Lord', but a

³ Hauerwas, Stanley and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, (Abington Press: Nashville, TN) 1989. Pg. 33,45

⁴ *Resident Aliens* pg. 47 (italics mine)

⁵ Hauerwas, Stanley 'The Gesture of a Truthful Story'

changing life that conforms in increasing measure to that truth and its implications.

It is Hauerwas' view that the community of the church, not individual people, discerns what is right and wrong. Individuals may be called upon to use their gifts and abilities to help inform the community's decisions and direction. The community is the agent of decision concerning the course of action or belief for the church. These decisions are made having been informed by their understanding of the gospel. The community of the church aids one another as individuals and as a group in understanding of the gospel and in living it out. To Hauerwas, understanding the gospel means living it out. Belief and practice are inseparably joined. Those who have a more mature understanding and experience of living out the gospel serve as examples for others. Hauerwas likens them to masters of a trade who help the apprentices, the less mature members of the church, learn how to live out the gospel story in their life.

The community of the church is also to be a diverse one. The church should see past barriers or boundaries that may exist outside the church. In the church, social, economic, racial and gender differences do not matter. Any differences between members in the church are based upon their vocation and gifting in the church. In status or in value all members are equal. The only boundary that truly matters is that all in the church have accepted the gospel of Jesus and are seeking to live that out.

As mentioned earlier, Hauerwas cannot conceive of a separation between belief and action. They are inseparable. For him, the Christian message demands faith and action in constant connection. The nature of the way of life for the church follows the story of God as revealed most clearly through the calling of Israel and the life of Jesus Christ. Hauerwas writes, "That story requires the formation of a corresponding community that has learned to live in ways appropriate to them."⁶ This way of living, Hauerwas believes, is much different than that of how life was lived before joining the church. This way of life is one that must be learned, unlearning the patterns of belief lived out before accepting the gospel.

Worship is one of the foundational activities for Hauerwas' consideration of the church learning how to live differently. In worship the church looks towards God, the source for

⁶ 'Gesture'

knowledge of truth. In seeing the truth through worship the church learns how to do what is right. Worshipping, seeing the truth, is more important than to be told what is right or wrong.⁷ By doing this in a community context the individual is less likely to misunderstand the truth as they see God together.⁸ Through worship the church exposes itself to the truth, to see God. Worship trains the church to see what is right, from seeing doing then becomes possible.

The Christian sacraments of baptism and eucharist also aid the church in this important task of learning a new way of living. For Hauerwas these are not simply religious rites with only spiritual significance. They are also a practical tool to teach Christians who they are and how they are supposed to be.⁹ Baptism is the initiation rite for an individual into the community of the church. It calls all of the church to understand and accept that they are more truly family than any other bond or relationship. Baptism signifies that the individual has become part of the story of God, part of His people. Being a disciple of Jesus Christ is a more binding commitment than any other. This loyalty to church first above all other persons, Hauerwas sees as a part of the Christian commitment.¹⁰ The eucharist teaches the necessity of existing as a 'peaceable community'; affirming upon the participants the understanding they are part of Christ's kingdom.¹¹ It reminds through ritual that all members of the church are equal and are to be treated that way. The sacraments of the church are more than simply gestures towards ideas, but actually teach through ritual certain necessary skills of what it means to be Christian. These sacraments teach that loyalty and unity with God and one another are actual and need to be practiced at all times, not just at the time of the ritual itself.

⁷ *Resident Aliens* pg. 95

⁸ Here it is important to remember Hauerwas' communal nature to recognizing truth, as well as the communal nature of worship. For Hauerwas the individual is not the agent who chooses what is right or wrong, it is the community. As the community worships together, they see God through preaching and sacrament. The individual sees God in this, yet the community also informs the message and meaning of what is seen and heard. This connects to Hauerwas' belief that the lectionary is important for worship because it teaches the church that it does not determine the meaning or message of Scripture, Scripture determines the meaning and message of the church.

⁹ Hauerwas, Stanley, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press) 1983. Pg. 108

¹⁰ Hauerwas, Stanley 'Knowing How to Go On When You Do Not Know Where You Are: A Response to John Cobb, Jr.'

¹¹ *Peaceable Kingdom* pg. 108

Becoming a Christian means becoming part of the Christian community with all of its rituals, institutions, practices and history. Becoming a Christian means entering into the story of God as made manifest now by the church. The church is served by its rituals, shaped by them, but is not determined by them. What shapes and determines the nature of the church is the gospel message of God. The gospel, for Hauerwas, is the story of Jesus.¹² This story is more than the account of Jesus' life, but rather a story that also teaches those who accept it how to life in relation to the life of Jesus.

The great magic of the Gospel is providing us with the skills to acknowledge our life, as created, without resentment or regret. Such skills must be embodied in a community of people across time, constituted by practices such as baptism, preaching, and the Eucharist, which become the means for us to discover God's story for our lives.¹³

For Hauerwas, the rituals of the church give practical illustrations to the church of how it should be. They are communal rituals, not individualistic in their meaning. In the rituals of the church the individual understands their place in the community, and also sees what is required to be in unity with one another.¹⁴

This community of the church, for Hauerwas, must also be one of discipline. It requires discipline for the church to exist and function as called by God. Part of realizing this characteristic of discipline requires the members of the church as a community to allow the shaping of their lives by one another in accordance with the gospel. Doing this means the community, not particular individuals, determines what is or is not in conformance to the gospel message, in belief and practice.¹⁵ No one person has the right or calling to determine individual truth or practice. No one person has the right or calling to determine the truth or practice for another person. Truth is God's domain. It is discovered through community. The community aids individuals to live out the truth more fully by calling one another to look toward God together. This can involve teaching or training in a positive sense, or in a more critical sense, correcting wrong thinking or action. Without both aspects the church fails to

¹² The rest of Scripture also has a place for Hauerwas. Jesus, however, forms the core of the gospel message and is what the rest of Scripture points to.

¹³ Hauerwas, Stanley 'Preaching as though we had enemies'

¹⁴ More will be said about this in following sections.

¹⁵ *After Christendom* pg. 93ff

allow the truth full reign.

This requires the church to train its members to understand their responsibility to call one another to united adherence to their story, the gospel of God. Legalistic adherence to a set of regulations is not the desired outcome, rather a faithful carrying out of the gospel together as community. Christian living is the learning of a craft.¹⁶ Hauerwas sees new Christians like apprentices to a trade. They know little, if anything about their new vocation. Neither are they expected to know much. Those with greater knowledge and experience are expected to train them teaching them to use the new tools and vocabulary of their chosen vocation. Correction is simply part of learning a new craft. Learning the gospel, like learning a trade, is never finished. It is a continual process of training and practice moving towards greater conformity with the character and teaching of Jesus. This requires all within the church to be open to correction and further training, even the experienced.

When a craft and a community are in good working order, discipline is quite literally a joy, as it provides one with power -- and in particular a power for service -- that is otherwise missing.¹⁷

Growing in a craft or as a Christian allows more and more competence, feeling of freedom and confidence as all are valued and treated as useful. Communal discipline, properly practiced according to the principles laid down by Jesus and Paul¹⁸ empowers the church to greater faithfulness to the gospel, a greater expression of the way of life called for by the gospel.

Called

Another characterization of the church for Hauerwas is that it must be holy, separate from what is sinful. It is to be truly Christian, separated towards living out the gospel and separated from what opposes that gospel message. This may sound obvious, but for Hauerwas it is very important to be clear on the meaning of this concerning the nature of the church. One of his 'marks of the church', what signifies the church as truly the church, is

¹⁶ *After Christendom* pg. 102ff

¹⁷ *After Christendom* pg. 107

¹⁸ These principles are laid out in Mt. 18 and 1 Cor. 5. A description of the practical outworking of these principles will be given in a later chapter.

that of living or pursuing a holy life. Christians are to live in such a way that shows their life together in community is informed by and is progressively conformed more closely to the gospel message. Hauerwas makes clear his belief that doctrine, what the church believes, is not truly believed unless it makes a practical difference in how one lives. Without a life that witnesses to something different than the messages of surrounding culture, even if not always successfully, the God shown to the surrounding culture, he believes, will be taken as false or even worse, meaningless.¹⁹

Hauerwas defines holy living in an interesting way. It is not done by living a moral life in general terms. It is done by faithfully living according to the specific narrative of the gospel. The gospel is more than just the Scripture decrees. It includes the example of Jesus, the history of the people of Israel, and the implications drawn from these sources. By living faithfully to the gospel, Christians affirm they are “creatures of a gracious God who asks nothing less of us than faithful service to God’s Kingdom.”²⁰ Holy living is not found by following rules or certain principles, but rather by faithfulness to the calling of God given through His story. It is not something legalistically achieved, it involves a constant conversation between a person’s old narrative of how life was lived and the new narrative of the gospel, God’s narrative. The struggle of living morally is of making this narrative of the gospel more and more one’s own personal narrative. It comes primarily not from hearing that story, but from learning to imitate those who have learned more of that story.²¹

This call for living a holy life creates even more reason for the church to understand itself as a community. It must be community, otherwise individuals will be unable to produce the kind of life demanded by the gospel. Only through mutual encouragement and correction through a loving and committed community can individuals hope to live out a life that reveals God to others. Living in relationship with other followers of the gospel is a primary way of learning how to be a disciple.²² Community offers the opportunity to live out the gospel, to practice it.

¹⁹ *Peaceable Kingdom* pg. 109

²⁰ ‘Gesture’

²¹ Hauerwas, Stanley, ‘Character, Narrative, and Growth in the Christian Life’ in *The Hauerwas Reader* ed. John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Durham, NC: Duke University Press) 2001 pg. 254

²² *Resident Aliens* pg. 102

For effective discipleship to come about it requires that the church be truthful in all its beliefs and practices, says Hauerwas. Otherwise, the church will simply *have* a social ethic, a code of conduct, rather than *be* one. Understanding itself as a social ethic is key to Hauerwas' vision of the church. This requires that the church tell the truth even if it means risking pain or internal disorder through exposing its own failures. Only then can it be seen by all that the church does not fear the truth, but embraces it seeking to live it out.²³ This truthfulness Hauerwas sees as a key ingredient for the surrounding culture to see something different in the messages and actions of the church.

To Hauerwas, the church must understand itself as a political body, a *polis*, a group of people called together to live out the gospel message of Jesus Christ. That message must be accepted as true to enter into its community. That acceptance, done by faith in the truth of the message of Jesus, must be shown then in one's lifestyle continually seeking to conform more perfectly to the gospel. Community is vital for Hauerwas. It provides the resources for the church to withstand the pressures and messages of its surrounding culture so the gospel can be more faithfully understood and lived out. The community of the church, in living faithfully to the gospel, will stand apart from its culture in living out the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Powers\Culture

In opposition to the church Hauerwas sees forces at work within surrounding culture. This is not to say that all of surrounding culture or the forces at work within it are against the church. Hauerwas sees, in general, greater opposition than support for the church in surrounding culture. Yet, in speaking about surrounding culture Hauerwas actually says very little on a foundational level. He writes greatly against aspects of his own culture, that of the United States, but of the nature and purpose of surrounding culture or the 'powers' or 'world' described by Paul and John in the New Testament, Hauerwas says little.²⁴

The most concise section of Hauerwas' view of the purpose of the state, one of the

²³ 'Gesture'

²⁴ This is interesting considering his agreement with the critique of Niebuhr's being too uncritical of what culture was as noted below.

powers, comes in Hauerwas' response to a position paper written by the United Methodist Bishops' on Nuclear War.²⁵ In his essay, Hauerwas writes that the purpose of the state is that "the good are to be protected, the evildoers are to be restrained, and the fabric of society is to be preserved, both from revolutions and war".²⁶ So the state, and by extension other powers, are in place to provide the necessary structures for society so that it can function as peaceably as possible.

This function of providing a stable society is not what Hauerwas sees the powers currently doing however. He sees the powers basing themselves on false stories, meaning any story that is not the gospel. These false stories bring violence and corruption of what is good. Rather than seek to make wrongs right, the powers feed on the inability of people to make wrongs right themselves.²⁷ The powers fail to maintain their purpose and effectively enslave humanity to their story of how life is to be lived out and to what end. Those stories may vary in different places and times, but the failure of the powers is the same.

This failure comes from the powers rejection of the authority of God. Hauerwas does not state the specific relationship between God and the powers, except that the powers are under the authority of God. Leaning heavily upon Yoder's work in *The Original Revolution*, Hauerwas sees the resurrection of Christ showing His authority over the principalities and powers.²⁸ The powers, despite their continued inclination towards evil, are under the reign of Christ and thus are made to serve His purposes. This is not that the powers cannot continue to promote evil, but that Christ has been shown as the true Lord, restraint of the powers is possible now, and that ultimately sin and the forces of sin will be defeated.

To Hauerwas the powers that shape surrounding culture, particularly his own, are against the gospel message of Jesus Christ. They fail in functioning obediently to God and seek to move away from His authority. Despite this the powers are still under the authority of God

²⁵ That essay is entitled 'On Being a Church Capable of Addressing a World at War' It can be found in Ramsey, Paul ed. *Defense of Creation: The Nuclear Crisis and a Just Peace* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press) 1988

²⁶ 'On Being a Church Capable' in *The Hauerwas Reader* pg. 439 It should be noted that this is actually taken from John Howard Yoder's work *The Original Revolution*. The entire section in Hauerwas' essay that deals with the nature of the state and the meaning of Christian pacifism comes from Yoder's book. He adds little but commentary to connect to the thrust of his essay's particular situation.

²⁷ 'Truthfulness requires Forgiveness' in *The Hauerwas Reader* pg. 312

²⁸ 'On Being a Church Capable' in *The Hauerwas Reader* pg. 438

and can still serve His purposes, though not willingly. They have been made for positive purposes but fail to carry them out in obedience to God. Yet, because of the resurrection the powers are shown to be under God's authority, despite their rebelliousness.²⁹

Relationship of the Church to the Surrounding Culture

Hauerwas' view of the church's relationship to its surrounding culture is a distinctive element to his theology. He views the church as distinct from its culture, a necessary separation so that the church can accurately critique its culture. This ensures that the church will always be a minority in its culture, its criticisms making it unpopular to those outside the church. Hauerwas sees that the church is not called to manage its surrounding culture, yet still bring concrete blessing to it, as the church is God's intended instrument for bringing positive change to that culture.

It is his description of the proper relationship between the church and its surrounding culture within Hauerwas' thought that brings the sectarian charge against him. By sectarian his critics mean that he holds the church as fundamentally distinct from the culture around it, to the point of being irrelevant or unrelated to the culture and incapable of constructively speaking to it. Hauerwas sees this critique as coming from those influenced by the work of Troeltsch and H.R. Niebuhr, which he denies as credible, even dangerously misleading. Hauerwas sees Niebuhr especially as uncritical of the moral nature of culture, something the church, for him, cannot be.³⁰

For Hauerwas, the church must be critical of its surrounding culture so that it can understand how to be properly separate from it. Then it can faithfully be the church. The reason Hauerwas sees the need for the church (the community attempting to be faithful to God) to be the church, is so that the world (including cultures which are less faithful to God, even rebellious) understands that it is the world.³¹ This positive motive of showing surrounding culture its errors in belief and practice, for Hauerwas, requires that the church be distinct from the world. This assertion forms the core of how Hauerwas sees the relationship

²⁹ This fits with the Christus Victor atonement model.

³⁰ Hauerwas, Stanley 'Will the Real Sectarian Please Stand Up'

³¹ *Resident Aliens* pg. 94 Though this shows up in various places in Hauerwas' writings in various forms.

between church and surrounding culture.

Understanding Hauerwas' sharp distinction between the church and its surrounding culture is important to understanding his thought. Culture influenced or dominated by the world is still under the authority of God, yet is in opposition or rebellion against God. The distinction between church and world is in

the basic personal postures of men, some of whom confess and others do not confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. The distinction between church and the world is not something that God has imposed upon the world by prior metaphysical definition, nor is it only something which timid or pharisaical Christians have built around themselves. It is all of that in creation that has taken the freedom not yet to believe.³²

For Hauerwas all that is of 'the world' has chosen to reject Jesus. This creates then two separate paths, both following their own course. The first course, the old aeon, a term he borrows from Yoder, is based on the powers possessive rejection of obedience to God, specifically Jesus. The new aeon is that brought by Christ. These two aeons coexist, both in operation until the end of this world.

These aeons, therefore, exist simultaneously: the old points backward to history before Christ; the new points forward to the fulfillment of the kingdom of God made fully present in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Moreover, each aeon has a social manifestation: the former in the 'world', the latter in the church.³³

While Christ's resurrection showed that the powers are under His authority, it did not do away with them or with their influence and authority over humanity. The meaning of Jesus' confrontation with the powers was only to free us from the presuppositions that hold us to the old aeon, to the ways that the powers currently operate under.³⁴

Church distinct from Surrounding Culture

One very clear tenet of Hauerwas' thought is that the church must be separate from its surrounding culture. The manner of distinction or separation Hauerwas intends needs to be clarified. He does not advocate withdrawal for the purpose of forming visibly physical

³² 'Gesture'

³³ 'On Being A Church Capable' in *The Hauerwas Reader* pg. 437

³⁴ 'On Being A Church Capable' in *The Hauerwas Reader* pg. 452

enclaves in the midst of the culture surrounding it. He does not mean social withdrawal eliminating as much contact as possible with the authorities and structures of the culture. It is a separation of how the church lives and acts towards one another in all their relationships, including the relationship with its surrounding culture. It is a separation towards the truth, which unfortunately causes separation from all in the surrounding culture that does not see or acknowledge the truth contained in the story of God.

This separation towards truth is more than a simple move towards a personal piety. It is a move of a community towards living out the story of God, a story most clearly revealed to humanity through the people of Israel and most of all through Jesus Christ. This requires the separation of the church from its surrounding culture for the church to be able to interpret the culture surrounding it according to the truth of its story, the gospel. The more the church can conform itself as a community of the gospel, the more it can interact with its surrounding culture according to that gospel truth.

Hauerwas, as stated before, sees the church as community, a group of people bonded together. This grouping together is caused by the nature of the call of Christ. Just as immigrants from a particular country tend to group together for support in a new culture, so too the church needs to bond together for support in their strange surrounding culture. The surrounding culture is strange because it is at odds with the shaping force of the church, the story of Christ. This stance of Hauerwas is not intended to denote antagonism, but rather difference. The message of Jesus,

by its announcement and its demands, makes necessary the formation of a colony, not because disciples are those who have a need to be different, but because [the message] if believed and lived, makes us different, shows us the world is alien, an odd place where what makes sense to everybody else is revealed to be opposed to what God is doing among us.³⁵

The gospel message is the central story for the church. Yet, it is a story that must be worked out first within the church and only then outside in the surrounding culture. Without living out the gospel message, no one, not the disciple of Christ, nor the outside observer, can see if the gospel is true. This demands the church live out the gospel, rather than allowing it

³⁵ *Resident Aliens* pg. 74

to be simply a set of beliefs internally assented to in some fashion or perceived as merely such.

The claim that the church is a social ethic is an attempt to remind us that the church is the place where the story of God is enacted, told, and heard. Christian social ethics is not first of all principles or policies for social action, but rather the story of God's calling of Israel and of the life of Jesus. That story requires the formation of a corresponding community that has learned to live in ways appropriate to them. The church does not have a social ethic, but is a social ethic, then insofar as it is a community that can clearly be distinguished from the world.³⁶

Church brings Critique to Surrounding Culture

Hauerwas sees that the practices and institutions the church has received shape it, but do not determine it. For Hauerwas this means that while the church is shaped by its story, it must work out that story in the context it finds itself in. This does not mean making the gospel relevant to the surrounding culture, but rather the church interpreting that culture through the gospel.

Involved within this critical interaction is the church calling the culture to acknowledge the truth of the gospel. It means the church calls upon the surrounding culture to see itself in light of the claims of the story of God. This is what Jesus did, says Hauerwas, for why else did the authorities go to the trouble of having him killed? Jesus called upon the authorities of His surrounding culture to accept His claims as the ultimate authority of truth, the true servant of God. He confronted their perception of faithfulness to God and how life was to be lived.

Following this example, Hauerwas sees the church as responsible to God and to the surrounding culture to critique their surrounding culture. This critique is not one of constant criticism, but of discernment. By learning their own 'language', that of the gospel, Hauerwas sees the church can then accurately critique at the surrounding culture, seeing both its

³⁶ 'Gesture'

strengths and weaknesses.³⁷ By critiquing culture, the church is not acting as the conscience of culture. The church is acting as a separate community, still within the surrounding culture, but not bound or defined by it. The church is not calling surrounding culture to be 'better', but rather is calling individuals to understand their need to change. The church functions as 'resident aliens' showing another way of life based upon the gospel.

Church is in Minority in Surrounding Culture

Because of its responsibility to critique its surrounding culture, the community of the church will (or should according to Hauerwas) always be a minority. It is a colony living within a greater host. This view of Hauerwas is somewhat captured in the title of what is probably his most known book, *Resident Aliens*.³⁸ The church does not function as a defensive sort of colony, one seeking to withdraw and protect what it has from its surrounding culture. Rather, Hauerwas likens the church to a mobile or travelling body constantly seeking greater and greater faithfulness to the call of Christ.³⁹ The movement of the church is not geographic but rather of obedience. It seeks to constantly grow in faithfulness to the gospel. Hauerwas sees this move bringing opposition or withdrawal from surrounding culture because the worldview of the gospel and that of surrounding culture, particularly American culture, is markedly different. This opposition also makes unlikely a widespread acceptance of the gospel.

Church is unpopular\threat to Surrounding Culture

Part of the Hauerwas' reasoning for the difficult relationship between the church and culture is that the church is formed on things that the world cannot know by its own means. The church is formed by values and by a calling from God that is not available within the context of the world's (culture's) framework of understanding. Common to Hauerwas' writing is the concept of narrative or story. He speaks of different cultures, peoples, even individuals as having a story or narrative that they are a part of. It is the foundation of how

³⁷ Hauerwas, Stanley 'Why the 'Sectarian Temptation' is a Misrepresentation: A Response to James Gustafson' in *The Hauerwas Reader* pg. 102

³⁸ Another example being *Against the Nations*.

³⁹ *Resident Aliens* pg. 51-2

they view life and thus how they live. Those who believe in Jesus, in becoming part of the church, enter into the story of God. The church needs to understand its story to better relate that story to those around them. It need not fear the surrounding culture's messages for the church to be silent or private about its story. The church is called by God to live and preach the story of the gospel, of Jesus Christ. The gospel is the story that transcends the limitations of all other stories because it is the only story that fully reveals the truth of God.

Another aspect of the church's task is 'the formation of people who see clearly the cost of discipleship and are willing to pay the price.'⁴⁰ The example of the church, if faithful, will bring hostility from the surrounding culture. This hostility comes from the fact that the church seeks to do things in different ways, ways that confront the assumptions and foundations of the surrounding culture's perceptions, views and values. For instance, he sees surrounding culture viewing the church as fanatics as something natural to living out the gospel message.

How can you live out the radicality of the Christian message without becoming intolerant? This, of course, put me in something of a bind because I believe Christians in our time cannot avoid being identified as fanatics. Moreover, I believe there is nothing wrong with intolerance if you are the kind of Christian radical I believe we are called to be.⁴¹

The kind of intolerance Hauerwas speaks of is that which cannot abide that which opposes the gospel. The intolerance comes not from hostility between people, but between worldviews. The worldview of the gospel is opposed to that of those who have not accepted it.

We are not radicals because we assume a radical stance on this or that issue that the world understands as radical, but because any stance we assume must be witness to the God of Jesus Christ.⁴²

To Hauerwas the gospel itself is a radical message.

The confessing church seeks the visible church, a place, clearly visible to the world, in which people are faithful to their promises, love their enemies, tell the truth, honour the poor,

⁴⁰ *Resident Aliens* pg. 48

⁴¹ Hauerwas, Stanley *Sanctify Them in the Truth: Holiness Exemplified* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press) 1998. pg. 177

⁴² *Sanctify* pg. 178

suffer for righteousness, and thereby testify to the amazing community-creating power of God. The confessing church has no interest in withdrawing from the world, but it is not surprised when its witness evokes hostility from the world.⁴³

Church refuses to Manage Surrounding Culture

Given this unpopular mission of the church to critique the surrounding culture by revealing the truth, the question becomes next for Hauerwas, how should the church do this? Again, Hauerwas' method for the church doing this brings criticism. He repeatedly declares himself a pacifist, since Jesus was.⁴⁴ Critique of Hauerwas' pacifism is not the focus in this section, but Hauerwas' understanding of pacifism as the example of Jesus sets the foundation for his understanding of how the church must handle itself in relationship to not just culture but in all relationships, whether between individuals, groups or with the surrounding culture and powers.

With this said, Hauerwas sees a great struggle between church and its surrounding culture. Christianity, he views, as an unintelligible position without enemies. The point of Christianity he even sees as producing the right sort of enemies.⁴⁵ Truth brings enemies. Not acknowledging this struggle causes the church to become weak in its ability to produce a different alternative as it will fail to adhere to the gospel as opposed to the messages of its surrounding culture.⁴⁶ Hauerwas desires, most of all, for the church to be able to create its own culture based upon the gospel that can withstand the force of the world around it that threatens to reduce Christianity to mere beliefs.⁴⁷ The church needs to get over the fact that their mandate is not to run the world or determine culture. Then perhaps, he believes, Christians will live in such a way as to be attractive as a community so that those outside

⁴³ *Resident Aliens* pg. 46-7 - It should be noted that this quote is Hauerwas speaking about Yoder's writings on the church.

⁴⁴ It should be noted that Hauerwas does not cite Jesus as his reason for becoming a pacifist, but Yoder. He also remarks that the manner of his 'conversion' to pacifism was probably too easy for Yoder's preference.

⁴⁵ 'Preaching as though we had enemies'

⁴⁶ Perhaps this is a way of understanding why churches facing persecution are able to flourish and grow despite cultural pressure against them. They understand they are in a struggle with the powers around them and so depend upon the resources of their story, the gospel. They understand their commonality with the surrounding culture is minimal and more easily see and live out their true story, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

⁴⁷ *Sanctify* Pg. 160

would strongly consider joining.⁴⁸

Hauerwas sees the world's primary, even defining method of rule, as that of coercion, force and violence. This method forms the foundation of that which Hauerwas opposes with great vigour in his writings, thus his stance of pacifism. Cultural powers, whether governmental or other, see the way to gain their goals through coercion, force or violence. Among these goals is the desire for continued or growing control by these powers. Hauerwas, like others, such as the apostle Paul, personify these powers, showing them as something active, even alive. These powers keep control by coercion and force, offering security at the expense of truth, says Hauerwas.⁴⁹ This includes non-physical means such as scorn and contempt to physical means of violence and even war (as can be the case for nation states). In contrast, "the church is a community that is called to witness to the peaceable kingdom in common discipleship of Jesus Christ."⁵⁰

For the church another method compared to that of surrounding culture must not merely be chosen but must be acknowledged as *the* way for the church. The church "is a recapitulation of the life of Jesus".⁵¹ The church is to carry on the example of Jesus' life in how they live. Jesus' example, given through the gospels, shows to Hauerwas a path other than coercion or force. Jesus did not confront the powers through force, but rather confronted them in a peaceful way. He did not seek to rule or govern society, Jesus lived surrendered to God. This way of living, while not stopping the crucifixion, exposed the bankruptcy of the powers of the world to provide the very things they claimed they did. These things include security, truth and the meaning of life. God, the Sovereign of the Universe, did not seek to obtain His goals using the powers' manner through Jesus. Neither should the church. This church is called to be a counter cultural phenomenon, a new manner of organization or *polis*.⁵² It is a social manifestation of an alternative way of life, one based upon God's truth, shown through the life of Jesus.

⁴⁸ 'Knowing when to go on'

⁴⁹ Hauerwas, Stanley, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Ethic*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press) 1981 pg. 238 n.57

⁵⁰ Rasmusson, Arne *The Church as Polis: From Political Theology to Theological Politics as Exemplified by Jurgen Moltmann and Stanley Hauerwas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press) 1994 pg. 194

⁵¹ *Peaceable Kingdom* pg. 29

⁵² *Resident Aliens* pg. 30

For Hauerwas, the church's primary occupation is functioning as a social ethic, an alternative way of life practically demonstrated. It is to live out the implications of the gospel message, not merely give assent to them and call others to do the same. "The political question crucial to the church is what kind of community the church must be to be faithful to the narratives central to Christian convictions."⁵³ These narratives show a God who refused to coerce or impose Himself upon others. Rather, in Jesus, He lived out the truth and called others to join that way of life. Controlling or guiding history or culture is not the role of the church for Hauerwas. In fact, this is anathema to him. He views this as the ill that has plagued the church since Constantine. This is where the liturgy and history of the church can serve as correctives. In talking about the morality of a war in Iraq, Hauerwas notes that "for Christians, the proper home for the language of evil is the liturgy: it is God who deals with evil, and it's presumptuous for human beings to assume that our task is to do what only God can do."⁵⁴

Hauerwas' view concerning the task of the church also calls him to question even the practice of apologetics. He sees apologetics, or at least the contemporary version of it, as

based on the political assumption that Christians somehow have a stake in transforming our ecclesial claims into intellectual assumptions that will enable us to be faithful to Christ while still participating in the political structures of a world that does not yet know Christ.⁵⁵

This participating in the structures of the world, which includes culture, for Hauerwas, is not a valuable preoccupation for the church, because he does not see it considered as a valuable preoccupation within Scripture.⁵⁶ The church need not concern itself so much with explaining itself to those outside, but rather ensure that those inside understand what they are to believe and how to live that out in the midst of their culture.

Church brings concrete blessing to Surrounding Culture

⁵³ *The Church as Polis* pg. 187

⁵⁴ Hauerwas, Stanley, 'No, This War would not be moral'

⁵⁵ *Resident Aliens* pg. 22

⁵⁶ I wonder however what Hauerwas would think of passages such as Paul before the Aeropagus (Acts 17), Stephen's speech (Acts 7) or John's use of the term logos (John 1). But this I will leave to the critique section of this chapter.

The church conforming itself to the gospel is Hauerwas' central foundation for the mission of the church. His dominant theme is that the church must above all things focus on being the church, a community of God's followers who faithfully witness to the truth of the gospel message. He states this in various ways such as the church's first social task is to help the surrounding culture know it is the world by being the church, a community that lives out an alternative, not just any alternative, but the true alternative.⁵⁷ Or, "the political task of Christians is to be the church rather than to transform the world."⁵⁸ This demands that the church's focus must be on its own character and conduct before it looks to interact with that world (culture) surrounding it. That interaction begins, for Hauerwas, with the church devoted to its own message, then relating to the surrounding culture.

The task of the church is to be faithful to God in witnessing to the truth of the gospel, a message of peace and reconciliation delivered through peaceful means. This message of peace is practical. It is concerned about justice, but the church is to reach towards justice without violence or coercion, showing the truth of God's peace and reconciliation. By living out a different alternative to violence and coercion people are given a true choice as actually different ways of life can be seen. There is no other body or organization that can witness to the kingdom of God or His truth.

The church is not against the world or against culture, but rather for culture in bringing to it a message of reconciliation. This reconciliation is for all relationships, that with God, with others, whether political, social, economic or interpersonal and even within an individual. But reconciliation can only happen between two parties that are in conflict with one another. The message of the gospel includes bringing an understanding that there is a separation between the followers of God and those who have not accepted His story as true. The church must show the surrounding culture that the culture is in opposition to God. This is done through living out the gospel in community. By doing this the church shows surrounding culture the practical difference between the gospel message and the messages of the powers.

This separation can sound quite negative concerning the relationship of the church and the culture surrounding it. Hauerwas does not see it this way, as the end result of this

⁵⁷ 'Gesture'

⁵⁸ *Resident Aliens* pg. 38

separation is the path to blessing. He sees this 'separation' of the church from surrounding culture as necessary if reconciliation is going to be brought between those caught in the influence of that culture and God. Without a practical example of truth lived out Hauerwas does not see how those living without the truth might find it. "Therefore, the first social task of the church is to help the world know that it is the world. For without the church, the world has no means to know that it is the world."⁵⁹ This alternative embodied in the church is to expose the limits of the competing claims for the meaning or nature of truth embedded within the culture.

Church is God's Instrument for change in Surrounding Culture

The church seeks the accomplishment of God's kingdom over all nations and peoples. This happens through the church establishing peace between itself and God, which allows us to learn how to be peaceful with others around us.⁶⁰

The most effective social strategy for positive change in surrounding culture Hauerwas sees is the church. Here we show the world a manner of life the world can never achieve through social coercion or governmental action.⁶¹

For Hauerwas, the witness of the church is not primarily found in explicating dogma or avowing biblical principles in the marketplace of ideas and worldviews. The church is to live out the message of the gospel, albeit imperfectly. Then the right is earned to confront the surrounding culture with an alternative that cannot just be spoken about, but also shown by living witness. Some will hopefully accept that alternative.

This way of life is lived out in the church through its liturgy, history, preaching and practice. Through the rites of baptism, eucharist, marriage and others the church espouses values quite often contrary to the surrounding culture around them. The church declares itself a new humanity bound by relationships far beyond those of the culture around them. In the history of the church strength is found by remembering what God and those who have gone before have done and gone through. Their examples are instructive for the church's present behaviour.

⁵⁹ 'Gesture'

⁶⁰ 'Gesture'

⁶¹ *Resident Aliens* pg. 83

Baptism and eucharist stand as crucial gestures that are meant to shape us rightly to hear as well as enact the story. Through baptism and eucharist, we are initiated into God's life by our becoming part of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. These are essential gestures of the church, we cannot be the church without them. They are, in effect, essential reminders for the constitution of God's people in the world. Without them, we are constantly tempted to turn God into an ideology to supply our wants and needs rather than have our needs and wants transformed by God's capturing of our attention through the mundane life of Jesus of Nazareth.⁶²

Taking the liturgy and history of the church into everyday life is central to the practice of the church. It takes the truth declared in the liturgy and the example of the past and brings them into the present. Following the liturgy gives another means to discover the story of God and enable the church to conform to it.

This process brings the truth declared by the church into the 'marketplace' through a community of people dedicated to the story of God. While the church may not be perfect in its' presentation of the gospel at all times, it is the attempt to be faithful that matters to Hauerwas.

The church is that community pledged constantly to work out and test the implications of the story of God, as known through Israel and Jesus Christ, for its common life as well as the life of the world.⁶³

It is the church that is to *serve the world* by translating the truth of the gospel into the culture surrounding it by living it out in that culture. The church is a bridge between the two.⁶⁴ This task, for Hauerwas, should not be understood as the church making the gospel relevant to the surrounding culture, but as living as a community bound by the story of Jesus despite the culture surrounding it.⁶⁵ The church must in essence not interpret the gospel for their surrounding culture, but rather interpret their surrounding culture according to the gospel.

In looking at Hauerwas' thought it could be understood that his position's means of transforming surrounding culture would be the conversion of individual persons, with an eventual conversion of the culture by the conversion of the majority as the end goal or desire.

⁶² 'Gesture'

⁶³ *Peaceable Kingdom* pg. 131f

⁶⁴ *Resident Aliens*, pg. 139

⁶⁵ *Resident Aliens* pg. 30

This is not his argument, it might even be described as his nightmare.⁶⁶ The goal of the church is to worship Christ in all things. This is its task.⁶⁷ The church seeks to influence society by being the church, something that the no culture can be by itself. This is because the church has been given the wisdom and resources of God through Christ. Hauerwas does not seem that hopeful though of evoking great change upon surrounding culture, but rather of calling some into the church.

Methodology of Hauerwas

It may be difficult to state which Stanley Hauerwas is better known for, his style or his thought. Hauerwas' way of presenting his thoughts and arguments is quite provocative. This surely is his intention. He seems very sure that his positions are not popular, even not respected. For an outspoken pacifist, his style is often quite aggressive, even abrasive.⁶⁸ At times he makes statements seemingly designed to be 'over the top' or overly contrary in nature.

Interestingly, for a theologian, he refers quite infrequently to Scripture. Many theologians may not consistently refer to Scripture or provide even proof texts, but for one who is concerned about reclaiming the gospel as the central message for the church, it is striking. Sometimes it simply appears in the footnotes as a reference, not mentioned directly in the body of his writing. His method of presenting his ideas comes more often through the medium of story or narrative. While it does at times include Scripture, his writing more frequently refers to novels or other stories, such as anecdotes. This can be quite frustrating for readers who are looking for a sure biblical base within his arguments. In general he seems to assume this foundation, mentioning Scripture or the work of other theologians or philosophers, and continues on with his argument. It is interesting that Hauerwas rather infrequently refers to the very story, the Scriptures, that he views as the foundational story for the church.

⁶⁶ The conversion of the majority in a culture would probably be seen by Hauerwas as the ruin of the church, as it would most likely lead to a Constantinian dynamic again.

⁶⁷ *Resident Aliens* pg. 45

⁶⁸ I don't think that Hauerwas would see any problem in ardently arguing for any position. Passionate discourse is not coercion, though it perhaps does not fit some perceptions of what pacifism is or can look like.

Hauerwas' main form of writing is the occasional essay. He favours speaking about a particular issue rather than laying out a comprehensive statement concerning the church. He views each essay as one brick which while building upon each other still allows for freedom to explore and experiment.⁶⁹ Hauerwas does not want to be held to a systematic mould. He views systematizing the teaching of the church harmful to the health of the church.⁷⁰ This comes from his view of theology. For Hauerwas, theology must be found in the practices of the church first, rather than in abstract ideas. This is why he resists doing systematic theology.⁷¹ Systematizing the belief and practice of the church would impose a false unity upon the church, one that would eliminate the 'wonderful anarchy' of the church.⁷²

His overarching goal of his writings and preaching is that the church would be empowered by enabling the truth to be better understood and lived out by the church. Hauerwas' purpose is to look at the church first, call it towards a closer adherence to Scripture and the calling of God, (as he understands it). Then the surrounding culture can be interacted with, not on its terms, but rather by the practice of the church. Only by focusing on living out its message can the church hope to have anything positive to bring to its surrounding culture.

Conclusion

This is but a snapshot of the writing and person of Stanley Hauerwas. His personality, with its passionate abrasiveness certainly overshadows his work, but his work is worth paying attention to. He brings to the church a call to focus upon its message and practice, particularly because the two cannot be separated. Also, Hauerwas calls the church to understand its relationship with surrounding culture in a different way than it currently does, again at least in his culture. He calls upon the church to view its culture, not as its friend, ally, or responsibility, but as its enemy. Surrounding culture, he sees, dominated by an opposing force to the church, the powers that spread their own messages, ones opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

⁶⁹ *Sanctify* pg. 9

⁷⁰ *Sanctify* pg. 6

⁷¹ *Sanctify* pg. 157

⁷² *Sanctify* pg. 2,4

His own messages need to be tempered, as does his personality, but there is a core within Hauerwas' writings that have value for the church. He calls for the church to focus on faithfulness to its calling. Many disagree with Hauerwas' depiction of that calling, and his description of the relationship between church and culture, but few would disagree with calling the church to faithfulness. That call is worth recognizing, as is a great deal of what Hauerwas has to say. A greater discussion of Hauerwas' views will be given in chapters three and four. There more critical interaction with his views will occur, as well as some description of what practical value they can give to the church in understanding its relationship with its surrounding culture.

Comparing John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas on the Church and Culture

The relationship between church and culture has always been and remains one of great importance. How should the church relate to the culture surrounding it? What methods should the church use to engage its culture? Where does the church gain the example or model of how to be faithful to God, yet still be in its culture? This is not simply a North American or Western concern. This question matters for the church no matter what culture it may dwell in. Every church addresses, consciously or not, how to relate to its culture in a manner that honours God's calling for the church.

Both authors' views on the church and its relationship to surrounding culture have been closely linked. This is natural as Yoder has influenced Hauerwas, something Hauerwas himself has credited to Yoder in his writings.¹ Yet, there are distinct and important differences between the two. Examining these differences can offer greater ability to understand their individual voices amid their common call to the church.

This chapter will compare and contrast Yoder and Hauerwas' thought on church and culture. As the personality or other attributes of an author can affect their message, some observations contrasting Yoder and Hauerwas will be delineated first. Then their particular methodologies will be discussed in terms of their difference in approach and the effects of their approach upon their message. The outline of the previous chapters concerning the nature of the church, the powers, and the relationship of the church to its surrounding culture will then be used to describe further specific differences in their views not already mentioned. A summary critique of each author individually will follow to conclude the chapter. This structure will also provide the opportunity to see throughout the chapter the practical consequences of their theological views relating to other areas of theology, such as sin and their view of God. I will present Hauerwas first, then Yoder, as in general I believe Yoder balances Hauerwas' views and personality.

General Observations

¹ *Sanctify Them in the Truth*, 9 This is just one reference among many Hauerwas makes concerning Yoder's influence upon him. For more see Hauerwas' essay 'Christian Ethics: A Promising Obituary' in *Introduction to Theology: Contemporary North American Perspectives* edited by Roger A. Badham (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press) 1998. Pg. 103-115, esp. pgs 104, 114-4.

In this first section some general comments about each author's position or personality will be mentioned. This is important because personality and general outlook can influence an author's perspective, style and content. Yoder and Hauerwas are definitely different in terms of their style and personality.

Pessimist vs. Realist

Both authors have different attitudes that show in their writing. Hauerwas is generally quite pessimistic concerning the future success of the North American church resisting its surrounding culture. He sees the church as under enemy control. It is dominated by the values and thought structures of its culture. He does not consider the church's future completely hopeless, yet in general his writing discloses a sense that the battle between the church and culture is a rout, with only pockets of resistance to surrounding culture still to be found in the church. Hauerwas trusts that God will work through the church, yet in looking at particular issues of culture he sees the church as dominated by its culture.

Yoder is less pessimistic in his outlook than Hauerwas. Like Hauerwas, Yoder does not see the surrounding culture accepting the Gospel message to any great degree. Yet, Yoder focuses more on the power of the gospel to create change, first in the church, then in those around it who might be willing to see things differently because of the actions of the church. He is not harsh in evaluation of culture. He defines it as rebellious so expects it to be resistant to the message of the gospel. Both authors see a difficult path for the church in relation to its surrounding culture, but Hauerwas is more pessimistic that the church's message will be successfully received than Yoder.

Non-Denominational vs. Peace Church

While both Hauerwas and Yoder seek to write for the whole church, they do this from somewhat different perspectives. Hauerwas, while a professor of a Methodist seminary, does not claim for himself one particular denomination or position as his own. In one of his clearest self-declarations he called himself a high-church Mennonite. He admits that he

began using the term to confuse his enemies, but the description has stuck to him.² He has also considered becoming Catholic during his lifetime. If anything Hauerwas would like to be described as a Methodist, but one of the sort he wished existed rather than what currently does. Despite this he does not come across as advocating one particular denomination, his Methodism or any other.

He sees his influences coming from quite a variety of traditions including Methodist, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Anabaptist.³ Hauerwas prefers to draw from what he sees as strengths from various denominations and is as comfortable citing Yoder as he is from Popes. The two traditions he seems to respect the most are those of Catholicism and Anabaptism. He views these traditions as having most consistently kept their identity and practice throughout their respective histories.⁴ The practice of Christian faith, regardless of tradition, is a hallmark virtue to Hauerwas. The reason for his desire to remain Methodist comes from his belief in its ability to pick and choose what it likes from other traditions and to leave out what it does not. Thus Hauerwas really cannot be claimed by, nor claims, any one tradition as truly his own, notwithstanding his United Methodist association. He does not openly advocate for a new tradition, though he may by default in picking and choosing from various strands to form his own position.

Hauerwas seems content for the church to continue on in separate denominations and traditions. He takes what he considers to be strengths, in doctrine or practice, from various denominations but never suggests that denominationalism should be worked against, even for simply the goal of greater communal effort. This is not to say it can be assumed that he would be against denominations working together. I simply think that Hauerwas does not consider it likely. His desire for the church, particularly the North American church, is that it should be faithful.⁵ Perhaps the best understanding of Hauerwas on this point would be to say that he sees ecumenicalism as a by-product of faithfulness. That is as the church becomes more faithful, differences would be looked and acted upon less.

In contrast, Yoder is clearly Mennonite. While he also considers his writings as for the

² *In Good Company* pg. 66

³ This is by no means an exhaustive list of his influences, nor are all of his influences Christian theologians.

⁴ *In Good Company* pg. 67

⁵ Hauerwas, Stanley 'Faithfulness First' www.globalengagement.org/issues/2002/02/hauerwas-p.htm

whole church, Yoder is thoroughly Mennonite. His Anabaptist roots are clear in his writings. He holds to classically Anabaptist doctrines such as pacifism, open meetings,⁶ laity oriented ecclesiology,⁷ and believer's baptism.⁸ Anabaptist/Mennonite historical and theological positions strongly influence his outlook and perspective. This goes beyond his avowal of historic peace church tenets such as the nature of church government and pacifism. For Yoder, the model of Anabaptist thinking forms a strong core of what Christian expression should be. Other traditions may have strengths or facets that can add to that of the peace church model, but Anabaptism is his core. He believes the peace church position most reflects the practical outworking of the commands of the gospel message.

These items of pessimism versus realism and denominational associations affect both authors views of the relationship between church and culture. It also affects how they see the likely outcome of that relationship. Likewise, these qualities influence how they view what others in the church have to say concerning the church and surrounding culture. This will be reflected in more detailed ways below as their particular views are contrasted.

Methodology

While the views of Yoder and Hauerwas have been frequently linked, their manner and style would never be considered similar. The nature and tone of their message divulges noticeable differences. This section will look at a number of the differences in the approaches of Yoder and Hauerwas. Some sections will highlight differences in their purposes for writing, others on how their approach affects the integrity and nature of their message. The main question of interest in this section is whether their medium truly fits their message? This will affect the integrity of their message for it will affect the content or perception of what they have to say. Where they are quite similar in their thought, their thought will be briefly harmonized as more detail has already been given in the first two chapters.

⁶ Open meetings are Yoder's description of church services where there is no appointed speaker, but where any member who has a message for the church may speak in turn. A fuller description can be found in Yoder's *Body Politics*.

⁷ More will be mentioned about this point in contrast to Hauerwas further on in the chapter.

⁸ Other denominations hold to some of these points of doctrine, but these are among the ones that stand out compared to other denominations.

Audience and Purpose

Both authors see their purpose as writing for the church as a whole. They consider themselves writing for all believers regardless of tradition. While they come from particular denominational backgrounds or affiliations, as mentioned above, they consider their positions as applicable for the entire church. In common, they see their writings for the church first. If any outside the church read their work they may gain some benefit, but they are not the intended audience by either author.

They write to Christians because their common desire is to see the church become more faithful in belief and practice. Both authors, as will be described in more detail below, see the church as missing key features of its calling. These missing features cause the church to err in its responsibility and role. Both view their work as a call of correction, though each does so in his own way.

Aggressive vs. Calm

As mentioned before the respective manners and style of Stanley Hauerwas and John Howard Yoder are quite different. Hauerwas has an aggressive quality to his writing, containing vocabulary, specifically expletives, which by itself would be considered offensive by many, even un-Christian by some.⁹ He confronts his readers with belligerent and audacious statements. Hauerwas intentionally makes statements in ways he knows will be controversial or striking to his audience.¹⁰ He intentionally makes excessive assertions to provoke response, whether positive or negative. Hauerwas pushes his readers, challenging them to either agree or disagree, never disregard, or at least he does this as much as possible.

This is noted here to highlight the strongly emotive, sometimes even harsh language he uses to describe his thoughts and beliefs. The nature of his material is antagonistic, speaking against the cultural values and foundations he sees negatively influencing the church. He rails against the church which still moves in the path of Christendom models and paths of

⁹ For example his use of expletives in his writing see *In Good Company* pg. 84-85. This is not the only place where he does this.

¹⁰ For example, 'Christians who insist on the politics of Jesus cannot but appear like Islamic fundamentalists -- not a bad place to be from my perspective.' *Sanctify Them in the Truth* pg. 188

doing things. Hauerwas' tone is not limited to interacting with what he opposes, he also aggressively promotes his ideas. The general tone of his writing is that of attack, upon what he sees as false ideas, practices or understandings.

Despite his tone and style Hauerwas does seek to be constructive in laying out what the church should be. His books *Resident Aliens* and *Where Resident Aliens Live*, for example, are constructive descriptions of what the church could and should be from his perspective. Yet, the co-author of these books, William H. Willimon, notes that his perception of Hauerwas is that "if Stanley is not offending someone, if half the room is not walking out in anger after his lecture, then Stanley thinks that he has said something unfaithful."¹¹ This is part of the tension in Hauerwas' body of work. Whether he is seeking to articulate his own position or interact with other positions Hauerwas is constantly abrasive, critical, and overbearing. The constructive aspects to his writing can get lost in his style and personality.

Another way of describing Hauerwas' writing is that he challenges the status quo he sees. He challenges elements in the church he sees as unfaithful to the gospel, which can at times seemingly amount to much of what the church does. He writes against how churches hold low standards of accountability and community, fail to care for those around them inside or outside of the church, look to government too often and too quickly for support, guidance and answers. There is little that Hauerwas concretely praises about the church beyond some individual examples which he holds up as illustrations.¹² His style is aggressive, looking for an argument, in hopes of bringing about change, or at least thought.

Yoder's approach is much different. He approaches his readers calmly, without rough words or abrasive style. He lays out his positions and arguments reasonably, whether in stating his own ideas or in responding to those of others. While he seeks acceptance of his ideas, it should be for the merit of the position, not because of how it was given. His passion, I suggest, is just as strong as Hauerwas, yet his personality is markedly different, as shown through his writing.

Yoder also looks at the flow of history concerning the relationship of church and culture, particularly through the example of the nation of Israel and the Anabaptist movement. If

¹¹ *Where Resident Aliens Live* pg. 12

¹² For this see the pattern of writing in *Resident Aliens* and its sequel *Where Resident Aliens Live*

anything is strongly criticized by Yoder it is the mistakes of the church made in the past, rather than those of the present. He calls for the reader to see the mistakes made in the past, ones that mirror issues going on at the present time. Yoder often trusts to the reader to make the connection between the mistakes of the past and the choices of today. This is unlike Hauerwas who generally tells the readers what he views as what are wrong decisions currently being made by the church or whomever his target is.

Their individual manner may not necessarily cause their particular positions to differ in content, but it can affect their message and its acceptance. Hauerwas creates conflict, even with those who may support him and his views. He can push people away before his thoughts have time to be listened to or considered. Yoder's style is to analytically challenge arguments he saw as false or misleading, building a responding argument upon what he sees as strong philosophical/theological foundations. Yoder's style makes it more likely for the reader to interact unemotionally. Hauerwas brings strong emotion and passion into his discussions, Yoder typically refrains. Both challenge their readers with their thought, whether aggressively or analytically. Their position on the relationship of the church to its surrounding culture may be similar in many respects, but these two men are quite different in their manner.

While they may look to the same goal of bringing constructive change to the church in its relationship to surrounding culture, their paths to that end are quite different. Yoder is more encouraging and empowering in his tone. Where Hauerwas may disparage his opponents or what he views as false, Yoder will hold up his view of the ideal, the standard for the church. He does this often by looking at particular passages of Scripture, showing the content that is there. Taking the understanding of the original audience or practice of the early church and holding up its meaning for today is a typical pattern for Yoder. This tends to come then in a form which without disrespect or contempt for the current church calls readers to adjust their thinking and practice.

Both authors' approaches have some value. Yoder seeks for the reader to think through the argument he is making and be convinced on its merit. His approach does not push anyone away unless they choose to not engage his thoughts at all. Yoder does not aggressively attack other viewpoints, but he does challenge positions he views as wrong or

misguided, such as H. Richard Niebuhr's remark concerning the political irresponsibility of the Mennonite church.¹³ His manner of debate is one of reserve, logic, and strong biblical scholarship.

Hauerwas' method also has its place, but perhaps one that needs more discernment in its use. Sometimes brash, even harsh, his approach does provoke response and thought, even if the intention of the respondent is only to refute Hauerwas. By itself, his avowal of pacifism, is controversial enough to provoke response, yet the manner in which he promotes his pacifism is different than Yoder. Hauerwas consciously throws his thought out into the mainstream tackling current issues such as the war in Iraq. Where Yoder remains somewhat aloof from directly tackling particular issues, Hauerwas addresses them head on. He writes on 'sensitive' issues such as homosexuality, the family, the treatment of the handicapped, war, government and others. He unapologetically tackles these kinds of issues, because he sees these issues are where the opinions and beliefs of church and surrounding culture collide. Hauerwas, whether one agrees with him or not, states his belief on what the practice of the Christian should be, from his perspective and opinion without apology.

American vs. Global

Another difference between these two authors is the general nature of their intended audience or the setting of the issues they address. Hauerwas usually writes for a specifically American audience. The issues he addresses are almost exclusively based from an American situation, whether church issues or those of surrounding American culture. This tendency comes from a number of factors. Hauerwas is not a supporter of doing systematic theology, which leads him to write solely on particular topics and issues. As a professor of theological ethics his discipline addresses particular issues as well. As a North American, he is most familiar with and involved in issues pertaining to the North American church and its surrounding culture. Ultimately, his choice to deal with American issues of church and culture is still his choice. Yet, he recognizes that Christian ethics speak beyond just

¹³ H.R. Niebuhr makes this remark in his book *Christ and Culture* (Harper and Row Publishers) 1951.

America.¹⁴ The person he cites as the herald of this revelation is none other than that of John Howard Yoder.

Yoder's writing is rarely directed to issues of only American, even North American perspective. Rather, Yoder's desire is to write what he sees as the biblical perspective for the church wherever it may be in the world. His perspective draws from more historical and Scriptural principles to show his ideas in concrete terms. He looks to give the worldwide church principles or tools to identify its role within its own culture.

This difference of perspective is important. While Hauerwas' writing may be easier for North American or Western audiences to identify with and see immediate application for their situation, Yoder's writing is more easily translatable to different cultures.¹⁵ This is important because the church extends beyond North America. In seeking to, more closely from Scripture, identify God's purpose for His people Yoder's writing is also less culturally identifiable than is Hauerwas'. Yoder's work comes across as something applicable to various cultures, where Hauerwas' work references North American culture almost exclusively. Hauerwas may cry against Christian ethics being a discussion that focuses on North America¹⁶, but in practice he fails to leave that boundary himself.

Use of Scripture

Both authors are also quite different in their approach to using Scripture in their writing. Hauerwas rarely bases his presentation on Scripture, whether directly or indirectly.¹⁷ When Scripture is contained within his writing it is often as a block of text with little interaction with it. His primary interactions are with other theologians and philosophers. The one

¹⁴ 'Christian Ethics In America: pg. 104

¹⁵ Part of this perspective may come from Yoder's multicultural experiences, both in Europe and in working for the Mennonite church in their mission work in Algeria.

¹⁶ Hauerwas, Stanley 'Christian Ethics In America: A Promising Obituary' pg. 104, 115 The argument of the essay is that Christian ethics in North America as a discipline focuses solely on North America and so brought itself to an end. John Howard Yoder is the one who has pointed a way out of this.

¹⁷ One example of this comes in his response to Pope John Paul II's encyclical 'Laborem Exercens'. His essay 'Work as Co-creation: A Critique of a Remarkably Bad Idea' criticizes the interpretation of particular passages yet Hauerwas gives no direct interpretation of his own. He simply refers to other passages which might have been more instructive or relevant to the issues raised. Hauerwas offers no interpretation of Scripture in his critique, only critique of the ideas derived from this apparently false interpretation. This essay is found in *In Good Company* pg. 109-24.

exception would be the sermons included in various books.¹⁸ Yet, these sermons usually do not deal directly with the biblical text in any kind of exegetical or critical analysis. He tends to immediately jump to issues he sees arising from the texts available to him through the liturgical cycle. His aversion to systematic theology also causes him to write little of what he considers 'formal' theology. Hauerwas writes more in the style of a social commentator focusing upon particular issues, with little recourse to quoting Scripture or of referencing it even indirectly.

This method is intentional. Hauerwas' concern is not as a biblical scholar,¹⁹ but as an ethicist. His concern is with the practice of the church. Thus, he criticizes the false ideas he sees affecting the practice of the church, while seeking to describe his understanding of what right practice would be. Hauerwas does not see how theology can be discussed without the practical outworking (ethic) of that theology as an integral part of the discussion. He acknowledges, because of this, the difficulty in reducing his work into any particular category.²⁰ It can be difficult to identify a particular genre for even one of his essays, let alone his overall body of work.

This makes it more difficult to interact with Hauerwas' theology as the reader does not always know where from Scripture (or whatever other source) Hauerwas has come by his ideas. He posits his ideas and concerns, but gives little concern to show their biblical foundation, even as he seeks to reclaim the Scriptures for Christians. This reclamation involves teaching the church to read the story of God in relation to its practice, as well as that of its surrounding culture. In his own words from his introduction to *Unleashing the Scriptures* he gives a good indication of his purpose, not just for his book, but for his overall project of writing.

I simply am not interested in 'careful' theology if that means avoiding the risk of writing about Christian convictions and practices as if they do not matter. Indeed, I believe that many of the disciplinary divisions characteristic of contemporary university and seminary curricula are but excuses for intellectual laziness or

¹⁸ For example see *Unleashing the Scripture*

¹⁹ Hauerwas, Stanley, *Unleashing the Scripture: Freeing the Bible from Captivity to America* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press) 1993. Pg. 9

²⁰ *After Christendom* pg. 19 He describes his own writing as a blend of theology, social and political theory, and high culture journalism.

cowardice, or both. ... I obviously am not familiar with all current historical-critical studies of various parts of the Bible and will therefore be accused of lacking 'expertise' or of unfairly stereotyping the diversity of the practise of historical criticism. ... One of the purposes of this book is to free those who preach and those who hear from thinking that we must rely on the latest biblical study if we are to proclaim the gospel.²¹

Hauerwas' goal is not to teach people how to read Scripture, but how to live out the practices he sees commanded by it. When biblical interpretation is mentioned by him, he tends to rely upon the work of others to show some foundation or expression of what he is saying.²²

Yoder, on the other hand, uses Scripture, whether citing it directly, or referencing it indirectly throughout his writings. He desires to show what he considers the meaning of the biblical text, whether in comparison to an alternative current understanding or to simply explicate his own insight. For example, *The Politics of Jesus*, his best known work, is based on a study of the gospel of Luke, Romans 13, and other areas of the New Testament. Consistently within his writings are quotes, references, allusions, or indirect references to Scripture. This aid the reader to see the biblical foundation he is basing his arguments upon. This makes testing and interacting Yoder's thought with Scripture easier than it does with Hauerwas. This is because Yoder clearly identifies for his readers the Scripture where he sees his ideas expressed or having foundation.

There is also a difference in style between how these two authors relate to other authors and positions. Hauerwas tends to simply state his ideas, whether his own or in response to critics. He usually assumes the reader knows or understands the references he makes. Also, sometimes Hauerwas will sometimes make rash statements without giving enough context to understand what exact point he is trying to make. Whereas Yoder more consistently gives alternative viewpoints in fuller measure, with his reasoning for rejecting or altering them.²³ This again gives readers of Yoder a better grasp of Yoder's insights in comparison to that of others. It is not that Hauerwas does not do this at all, but not nearly to the extent that Yoder

²¹ *Unleashing the Scriptures* pg. 7

²² The impact of this upon his message will be dealt with in the section of my critique of him.

²³ One example of this is in *The Christian Witness to the State*, where he gives examples of how the church\state model has been understood from various traditions.

does. It makes interacting with Yoder's thoughts easier, than with Hauerwas. This greater depth of foundation shown in Yoder's work, in my opinion, gives a greater challenge to his readers as they are enabled to see his point of view more fully contrasted with others.

In terms of approach, I favour Yoder's method. His methodology allows for a greater ability to fully understand and interact with his positions. This gives, I believe, Yoder a more persuasive voice than Hauerwas. Yoder's style gives the reader fewer barriers to understand his argument and the basis on which he is making it. Hauerwas, while seeking to speak for and to Christians, makes it more difficult to see the Scriptural basis for his thought. He uses biblical terms and references, but gives little direct description to their application to his ideas. This makes it more difficult to understand his biblical understanding and foundation or at least to see it. Yoder's approach of giving his source of interaction or support allows for a more complete interaction with his ideas.

Yoder gives helpful principles for the church in whatever culture it finds itself, yet Hauerwas gives some example of making those principles active in his own culture. Without working out the principles they would remain inactive and thus practically of little value.

Nature of the Church

In this section aspects or implications of both authors' work, following the format used in the previous chapters. First, we will look at the church as community. Then the nature of the character of the church as called by God to be holy will be discussed in relation to both authors' views.

Community

Hauerwas, strongly sees the pastoral office as part of the church. Where he does speak in negative terms towards the pastoral office, it is against those who fail to fulfill the pastoral calling or against influences which limit the understanding of pastors to fulfill their calling.²⁴ He sees a great necessity for those in pastoral ministry to possess the character to fulfill that ministry. For example, he states that virtues of constancy and patience are of particular

²⁴ *Resident Aliens* pg. 167-172

importance.²⁵ The community of the church has a definite hierarchical structure to Hauerwas. He sees great necessity, not just for the pastoral office, but for well trained and equipped individuals to fill that office.

Hauerwas writes little about a particular structure for the church beyond this but focuses on the practices of the church. He is more concerned with how the church should be in practice than about how the church should be structured in organization, whether in terms of leadership or ecclesial structure. He does not give a definitive view of how church leadership should be structured. This may lead to his ability to be comfortable with calling himself a Methodist, or high-church Mennonite and to relate easily with Catholics.²⁶

Yoder, in contrast to Hauerwas, presents a church structure that is laity oriented. In his *Body Politics*, Yoder writes a chapter concerning the Rule of Paul, or the ordering of services according to the early church. There he writes,

It is noteworthy that there is no reference to a single moderator, 'minister,' or 'priest' governing the process, as things tend to proceed in most Christian groups in our time.²⁷

He sees the individual congregation biblically empowered and Spirit enabled to minister and function without the position of an official 'pastor', or whatever term one might use. For broader issues, he advocates the same principle on a wider basis, as in the early church councils, as in the example of Acts 15.

Yoder's ecclesiology should not be understood as an abolition of clergy, but rather of the laity.²⁸ There is no Christian who is free from the responsibility to minister. There is no division between laity and clergy. His vision of biblical teaching is that all believers are ministers of the gospel.²⁹ There are no members of the church who should receive from the

²⁵ *In Good Company* pg. 159

²⁶ Not that there is anything wrong in him doing this. I am merely pointing out that Hauerwas does not advocate any particular traditions structure over another. He pulls out what he likes from wherever he finds it regardless of tradition.

²⁷ *Body Politics*, pg. 61

²⁸ McClendon, Jr., James 'The Believers Church in Theological Perspective' in *The Wisdom of the Cross: Essays in Honor of John Howard Yoder* ed. Stanley Hauerwas, Chris K. Huebner, Harry J. Huebner and Mark Thissen (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1999 pg. 325

²⁹ It is because of this stress on each believer as a minister that Yoder can be seen as expressing an abolition of the laity. There is no Christian who only receives from the church. All have a responsibility to minister. That responsibility to minister is better captured in the term clergy than in laity.

church without also giving in some measure through their giftedness. Yoder's ecclesial vision effectively removes the categories of laity and clergy, making all believers as ministers. One's giftedness or ministry within the church does not define their status with the church, merely their specific role.

This leads to an ecclesiology from Yoder that runs contrary to how the majority of churches today and over church history operate.³⁰ The nature of how decisions are made and how organizational structures work in most churches goes against what Yoder sees as the biblical model.

There is no voting in which a majority overruns a minority and no decision of a leader by virtue of his office. The only structure this process needs is the moderating that keeps it orderly and the recording of the conclusions reached.³¹

This process (the open meeting) leads to everyone able to voice their thoughts and beliefs whether on doctrinal issues or issues of action. That can aid the church in coming to common understanding of its calling and its message by hearing each members contribution.

This process Yoder sees as having the capacity to produce a fuller unity within the church than other models. Yoder's definition of a member is one who has chosen to actively belong to the church. Yoder answers the concern of anarchy with the belief that the Holy Spirit speaks to and through all believers. If the church is seeking to honour the sovereignty of Jesus Christ, unity in essentials and in direction in service to Christ cannot but happen.³² Autocratic or authoritarian models of church structure and decision making Yoder sees as nothing less than the power tactics of Constantinianism.³³ It is not that Yoder sees Constantinian style decrees as unable to reach the right answer. It is that these tactics rarely produce unity within any group, let alone the church. One group will feel not listened to so

³⁰ I make this statement mainly out of personal and anecdotal experience, as well as some knowledge of church history. I am quite confident a survey of churches worldwide would show this trend currently.

³¹ *Body Politics*, pg. 67

³² *Body Politics*, pg. 70 This does not mean that all believers will look or act the same, nor have the same specific ministry, worship style, etc... It means that that group of believers will support one another in knowing and then moving on the path God sets before them, individually and as a group.

³³ Yoder even mentions Hauerwas' own denomination (United Methodists) as one which practices corporate style decision making. He also notes that these denominations know from experience that bare majority decisions simply create future problems. *Body Politics*, pg. 70

the conflict will not get truly resolved.³⁴ One of Yoder's concerns for the church is that it would express true unity, the capacity for the church to see itself and act as community without unnecessary barriers.³⁵ Unity is something he sees anything associated with a Constantian model rarely, if ever, being able to accomplish.

Yoder's ecclesial model follows the pattern of his style of writing. He holds out his ideas, not as something which must be accepted, but rather as something that should be considered seriously. They are his contribution to the church. This is critical to understanding Yoder's style and thought. He wants to be heard as one voice within the church. He does not want to overpower anyone, but dialogue with them. If anyone chooses to accept and follow any part of his thought, it is because they have chosen to change, it has not been forced upon them. Through this kind of discourse, whether between scholars, within congregations or between denominations, Yoder believes the Holy Spirit can work to bring unity.

The pattern and nature of church structure, particularly in terms of the clergy, is one clear point of difference between the two authors. As another example of this, Hauerwas, as opposed to Yoder, sees preaching as part of the ministry of the clergy alone. Yoder sees preaching for those who are gifted and called within the congregation to preach. Hauerwas sees a greater responsibility and calling upon the preacher,.

A Christian pastor is a powerful person because only the pastor has been given the authority to serve the eucharist and to preach the Word for the church -- to point to the very presence of God among us. That is power. ... The challenge is how to be a person who is morally capable of exercising the awesome power of Word and sacrament as bestowed by God and God's church.³⁶

This is not the only difference between the two authors concerning the clergy. Where Yoder sees the Holy Spirit as the authority which guides the church, Hauerwas has a different source. The authority for preaching, or rather what Scripture should be preached on any

³⁴ I think a survey of many church members experience would bear out his comments as valid.

³⁵ The key necessary barriers to Yoder would acceptance of the truth of Christ and faithfulness (not perfection) in living according to that truth. If someone was not conformed to these then they would not be united with the other members of the church. Unnecessary barriers would include social, economic, racial, and even denominational.

³⁶ *Resident Aliens* pg. 167-8

given Sunday is the lectionary.³⁷ The lectionary's authority shows that the decision for subject matter is in some form structured by the overall church rather than the preacher's whims. In following the lectionary the preacher shows the congregation that it too must subject its interpretation and view of Scripture to the overall church and not to their whims or ideas. As the preacher is called to conform to the Scripture, so too is the congregation. Hauerwas does not mention a practice of open meeting or regular laity brought sermons. Also, for one who is against systematic theology, Hauerwas strongly supports the system of the liturgy. He sees systematizing theology as harmful to the church, but the systematizing of selecting what Scripture will be preached upon does not harm its 'wonderful anarchy'. The liturgy is the ultimate guide for the preacher for Hauerwas, whereas the Holy Spirit is for Yoder.³⁸

With Hauerwas' structure, as little of it as is there, Yoder would be critical. Among his criticisms would be that Hauerwas still has some of the Constantinian model in his ecclesial structure. There is a great deal of power residing in the office of the clergy, which Yoder does not agree with as a biblical idea or model for church ministry. Power is not evenly shared, but comes from the pastoral office. Yoder would also probably view the liturgy used as Hauerwas suggests as a form of unnecessary boundary upon the Holy Spirit. The church, to Yoder, should allow the Holy Spirit to guide its meeting, including what Scripture is brought forward for the church's instruction and edification.

Another difference between Yoder and Hauerwas should also be noted. Both hold that the community of the church is responsible for discerning the proper understanding of the gospel, as well as its proper application and practice. Hauerwas does not seem to consider the possibility that the community of the church might be wrong. There are obvious historical examples of communities of believers coming to wrong conclusions.³⁹ It seems that for Hauerwas those who have wrong conclusions concerning the proper understanding and practice of the gospel are not the church. Hauerwas discusses the need for discipline

³⁷ *Sanctify Them in the Truth* pg. 237

³⁸ I am not stating here that the use of the liturgy as guide for a congregation or denomination is beyond the power of the Holy Spirit to guide preachers in bringing God's message to His people. I am writing on what I see Yoder's response to the use of liturgy as guide would be.

³⁹ These can include Luther's condemnation of the Jews, the Munster rebellion, and some North American churches views of African Americans which led them to stand against or condemn the civil rights movement.

within the church for individuals, but fails to consider that that community of the church might fail in discerning the meaning and call of the gospel.

Yoder, in distinction from Hauerwas, allows for failure within the church as a community in understanding the gospel. This allows for genuinely held variances in opinion concerning the meaning of Scripture for the church. Yoder acknowledges sin within the church as a factor, not only in individuals, but also in the community of the church. No church will be perfect in Yoder's view. This requires the community of the church to interact with the Scriptures to constantly evaluate practice and belief.

Called

Both authors have a similar description of the nature of the church's holiness. The church is called by God, but does not discharge that calling perfectly. This calling is for the church to be faithful to God's calling upon it as individuals and corporately, regardless of the culture surrounding it. The church is to focus on understanding its identity as the people of God and live to His standard of holiness.

In contrast to focusing on the needs of society around, these authors suggest that the primary mission of the church is to be a community of faithful followers as the example or story of God found most clearly through the life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. This is not a withdrawal into itself, but rather a focus on being what God has chosen, created and called to be His representatives in the world.

This requires that the church be a community of faithful disciples who practice together the virtues and values of being followers of Jesus. Church membership comes from a personal choice to acknowledge and follow Jesus as Lord. Being a faithful community requires that the church hold itself to a high standard of holiness as it seeks to follow the calling of God. This standard is only for those who have chosen to join the church, for in joining the church submitting to this standard is assumed, or should be, in these authors' estimation. Working towards living out this standard in practical reality can only be done within community, causing the members of the church to grow together in greater faithfulness to the calling upon them.

In defining faithfulness there is a distinction between the two authors. Hauerwas'

definition of faithfulness is being faithful to God's story, the revelation of God through Jesus and the nation of Israel concerning how life is to be viewed and lived. That faithfulness will draw individuals into the community of the church, for that is where salvation is experienced. Yet, the faithfulness Hauerwas speaks of, fails to tie strongly to the very Scriptures he asserts as the story we are to be faithful to. As mentioned before the Scriptures do not get strongly connected to the ethic he exhorts the church to live out in his writings. Hauerwas does not take and directly explicate his ethic for the church from biblical material, or at least not as a primary source. His principles are not connected to the story he considers the foundation for the church's ethic.

In Hauerwas' writings, the term gospel can tend to be understood as what he considers to be right and good. As mentioned already in the section concerning the use of Scripture, Hauerwas can take what he wants to show his point, rather than work from the Scriptures to discern its teaching.⁴⁰ Hauerwas' conviction that the ethics are tied to belief is important here. At times he can seem to affirm that the gospel cannot be understood by the church unless it is put into practice.⁴¹ If he would stop there this would be acceptable. Unfortunately, his use of sources other than Scripture give the impression that it is actually the practices of the church which should be looked at to find Christian doctrine as in the case of the lesbians' testimony being viewed as Hauerwas as more normative for finding proper Christian doctrine than the Scriptures.

For Hauerwas, sin is effectively disconnected from the teaching of Jesus and the rest of Scripture. This comes from Hauerwas' assertion that doctrine has no meaning apart from the practice of the church. This would not be an issue if he meant that doctrine is not understood unless it is lived out. Unfortunately, Hauerwas' examples give the strong impression that he means doctrine is only identified in the current practice of the church. This means we can see what the message of the church is by looking at what churches currently do. Combined with his doctrine that the church is capable and called to discern what is right or wrong, it is difficult to see what guidelines Hauerwas has for helping the church know when it has gone

⁴⁰ Again, his use of the second hand story of committed lesbians serves as a clearer text to discerning the proper stance of the church towards the morality of homosexuality than the Scriptures.

⁴¹ Hauerwas, Stanley 'Christianity: It's Not a Religion: It's an Adventure' in *The Hauerwas Reader* ed. By John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Durham, NC: Duke University Press) 2001 pg. 522

wrong.

Now Hauerwas does state that there is sin, something wrong, in the church. He loudly proclaims that presently the church is not practicing what it should be. One clear example of this comes in Hauerwas' strong call for confronting one another in the church.⁴² Yet the only sin he seems to consider worthy of confrontation in the church is that of the church's compliance with the false messages of surrounding culture. A direct definition of sin that comes from or is based upon Scripture is lacking within Hauerwas' writings. He may assume that basis, but the practical examples in his writing disguise it well. Again, Hauerwas gives little instruction to the church of how to directly connect its ethic to its central message. This makes it more difficult for the church as well to identify where it has gone awry.

Hauerwas' view of sin differs from Yoder. Yoder keeps a firm connection between his understanding of the Scriptures and sin. He sees a strong connection between the commands of Jesus, for example, and how Jesus' followers are to actually live. Failure to keep the commands and example of Jesus is a form of sin. This is one of the key points of his book *The Politics of Jesus*, that the teaching and example of Jesus is actually normative for the lifestyle of His followers. Specific sins, as well as what is proper, are defined in accordance with what is found in Scripture.

The practice of discerning what is normative in the teaching and example of Jesus is not always easy. It involves separating or distinguishing between what is specific to Jesus' culture and what is principle which is to be transferred on to the church for its practice and belief regardless of its contemporary culture.⁴³ This is where various traditions come into discussion and sometimes conflict with one another. These discussions are important and valuable as the various voices can join provoke a greater understanding of the Scriptures. Most Christian traditions would hold to the teaching and life example of Jesus being at the core of Christian ethics. The issue between traditions is how to view this material to bring out the principles contained within the life and teaching of Jesus.

⁴² Hauerwas, Stanley 'Peacemaking: The Virtue of the Church' in *The Hauerwas Reader* ed. By John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Durham, NC: Duke University Press) 2001 pg. 319-21

⁴³ For example, Jesus spoke in Aramaic, taught in parables, and called twelve men to be his closest disciples. These are not to be followed as the way the entire church be. Though the church could, for example, see that speaking in the vernacular, teaching in culturally relevant formats and the model of mentoring can be seen as principles from these examples.

The church is not perfect. It is populated by sinners, himself included. Part of his theological model is that the church is not fully conformed to God's calling upon it. This is Yoder's basis for the necessity of the practice of confronting one another in the church over their sins. It is for the purpose of calling one another into closer compliance to the teaching and example of Jesus and the Scriptures. For it is Jesus and the Scriptures which are the arbiters of what is right and wrong. The role of the church is to hold one another to the Scriptural standard, rather than to determine that standard, as seems Hauerwas' practice.⁴⁴

Pacifism

Both authors declare themselves as pacifists and that the church should be so as well. Yoder is known for his writings against the just war position in favour of pacifism. Hauerwas has written for pacifism in essays against the war in Iraq, as well as other works. This pacifism is more than an aversion to violence as a solution for problems on any level, whether international or interpersonal. Their pacifism is a nuanced position based upon principles they see as inherent to the Christian faith. Neither denies the reality nor horror of violence in the world today, even the violence committed by the church.⁴⁵ Neither do they see violence and the use and abuse of power as having no place within the framework of the working of the world as it is. They see violence as a real and unfortunate reality due to the state of the world, fallen from the purposes of God.

What both authors decry in their pacifism is the complicity of the church in anything violent or coercive, whether physical, emotional, spiritual or otherwise. Violence, coercion, or whatever term one might use is not the way of the church to respond to the problems of the world, nor to the problems an individual follower of Jesus might have in their life. These methods would force people against their will or decision to what they had never agreed to.⁴⁶ In Yoder's work, *The Politics of Jesus*, he sees the gospel of Luke showing Jesus' aversion to

⁴⁴ I do not want it to sound that I believe Hauerwas does not view Scripture as the standard for right and wrong. There is evidence or hints that is so, yet the way he uses Scripture speaks differently.

⁴⁵ Examples of violence propagated by the church are varied. The Crusades, Reformation era wars between Lutherans, Calvinists, and Catholics. These groups treatment of the Anabaptists during that time also is an example.

⁴⁶ In this sense church discipline is not coercive because in joining the church discipline, if necessary, is agreed to.

the use of violence or abuse of power.⁴⁷ Hauerwas also sees the church as needing to live pacifistically because of the example of God.

The reason I believe Christians have been given the permission, that is, why it is good news for us to live without resort to violence is that by doing so we live as God lives. Therefore pacifism is not first of all a prohibition, but an affirmation that God wills to rule his creation not through violence and coercion but by love. Moreover he has called us to be part of his rule by calling us into a community that is governed by peace.⁴⁸

They both see pacifism as the calling of God upon the church for the purpose of bringing God's peace and reconciliation to the world. It forms a central core for both authors of how the church must relate to the culture surrounding it and to the relationships within it.

Now in the outworking of their pacifism there is a difference between the two authors, evidenced in their personal style of writing. Yoder's pacifism is demonstrated in the style of his writing. He states his thoughts without requiring acceptance or giving belligerent disagreement or argumentation. He seeks acceptance for his proposals and refutes positions he sees as invalid, but not by demanding or forcing himself upon his audience. Hauerwas, is quite different. His abrasive style has already been noted. Where for Yoder pacifism seems a more consistently lived out tenet, for Hauerwas it is like a battle within him to hold onto as a belief in practice.⁴⁹ But Hauerwas' claim to pacifism still makes clear some things about the pacifism he calls the church to.

This ornery man's claim to be a pacifist serves two purposes. In the first place, it demonstrates that Jesus' non-violence does not preclude, but rather requires, conflict with the principalities and powers that maintain the appearance of order through the threat of violence. In the second place, Stanley's public claim of pacifism illustrates the communal nature of virtue in the Christian community, for Stanley cannot claim peaceableness as his own native endowment. ... It is therefore necessary to have a community of people committed to creating peace in order to keep each other faithful. Stanley Hauerwas declares aloud that he is a pacifist so that others will

⁴⁷ Chapters in particular are (4) - God will fight for us, (5) - The Possibility of Non-violent Resistance, (8) - Christ and Power and (9) - Revolutionary Subordination. Also see Yoder's chapter (10) on the writing of Paul, in particular that of Romans 13 and of Revelation (12 - The War of the Lamb). Yoder's view of the example of Christ, in particular here in relation to the relating to the use of violence or force is by no means the only one within Christian theology.

⁴⁸ *Pacifism: Some Ethical Considerations* p.99

⁴⁹ William Cavanaugh refers to Hauerwas as the pacifist he would want beside him in a bar fight. Cavanaugh, William 'Stan the Man: A Thoroughly Biased Account of a Completely Unobjective Person' in *The Hauerwas Reader* ed. By John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Durham, NC: Duke University Press) 2001 pg. 22

keep him from killing somebody.⁵⁰

This quote highlights important features of the pacifism both authors wish to make clear. Pacifism is not about creating a lack of conflict. That is unrealistic. Pacifism is about how to resolve conflict. It concerns all relationships from interpersonal relationships to the relationship of the communal church to its surrounding culture. The primary example of this comes from the Scriptures, particularly that of Jesus himself. The difference between Yoder and Hauerwas is that Yoder more consistently demonstrates this pacifism, where Hauerwas struggles to do so.

The struggle within Hauerwas to fully evidence his pacifism should not be taken as a weakness of his position. No one can claim to fully live out his or her beliefs. While his behaviour may cause questions as to his ability to articulate the position consistently it should not remove the position from consideration. It does impact the effectiveness of his message. It is hard to take seriously or see practically the pacifism of Hauerwas when his style and personal nature does not display the position he avows as being necessarily Christian. This does give a practical example however of the called, but not perfect nature of the church, which both authors also affirm.

Nature of the Powers (Surrounding Culture)

The main difference worth noting between Yoder and Hauerwas concerning the nature of the powers is Yoder's identification of the church itself being a power. This is a key insight, making clear that members of the church should evaluate not only their relationship with the surrounding culture, but also evaluate how it conducts itself in all its business and actions. As all powers can abuse their authority and position, so too can the church. It also gives further description to the ability for the church, as a corporate body, to function apart from the will of God.

This is a move apart from Hauerwas who critiques the church for not separating itself from the messages and means of the powers, yet fails to see the church as being a 'power' in itself. The church functions as a power, speaking to people of how they should live and how

⁵⁰ 'A Thoroughly Biased Account' pg. 22

to view what life is about. Identifying the church as a power reminds the church to be careful in how it carries out its tasks. The church, as a power, has the capacity to set a real example for how the powers are to relate to the calling of God. Acknowledging its nature as a power also encourages the church by reminding it that the church can truly affect the course of events outside of its own immediate sphere of influence. This is lacking in Hauerwas.

For Yoder the powers that exist in the world are not inherently evil or rebellious. They are on a continuum of obedience and rebelliousness. The church, as a power, can provide a clear example of the difference between what obedience and rebelliousness toward God looks like. Hauerwas, in his critical view of the powers, does not give this message clearly to the church on the level of the powers. It is easier to see in his writings that all the powers are to be condemned and avoided in all that they say. The possibility of connection and constructive interaction is not part of his call to the church. The powers are to be contrasted by the church being a different 'polis'. By living according to a different standard and calling, the church shows surrounding culture the true nature of the powers. The church is to show to surrounding culture there is a different way to live and view life. Yoder calls for the church to see itself as a power, as a visible example of obedience which can be then expressed to the other powers over culture, not just to people in that culture.

Relationship of the Church to the Surrounding Culture

This section will essentially use the same structure as the previous chapters concerning the relationship between the church and its surrounding culture. The sections on the church being a minority and unpopular in its surrounding culture and the church being God's instrument for bringing change will be left out. These sections are left out because there is no important difference between both authors on these points or that they are sufficiently dealt with in the context of another section. This section will highlight the differences in how the authors see the distinction of the church from its surrounding culture enabling it to bring an objective critique of that culture. Also, discussed in this section are the differences in their vision on how the church refuses to manage its surrounding culture and the nature of the blessing the church brings to the culture surrounding it.

In their view of a distinction between the nature of history and the story of humanity,

Yoder and Hauerwas are similar. Hauerwas quotes Yoder's perspective on this in supporting his position for pacifism over just war theory.⁵¹ This distinction is important for both authors in their understanding that the church is to be separate from the powers in the means it uses. Hauerwas essentially assumes Yoder's framework, so there is little to distinguish the two here, though how each work this out is different, as the following sections will show.

Church distinct from Surrounding Culture

Neither author sees their concept of the church as withdrawing from surrounding culture. The church is not to be separate from the culture surrounding it, but different from it. The nature of this difference is best characterized not in external forms, though that will eventually result, but rather in the foundation of how to live, the gospel message versus the messages of surrounding culture. Yoder and Hauerwas' concept is that the church lives differently in relation to surrounding culture because the church has been made different by God and now see the world differently.

This causes the church to view these structures, such as government, cultural or societal values, and economic models, not as autonomous structures, but rather as corrupted orders. They are not to be blindly followed, but actively questioned and if found in rebellion against God's calling, they are not to be followed. This they see as the example of Jesus as He went to the crucifixion. He rejected His surrounding culture's view of the true path to power, through domination or direct influence over society (Constantinianism's model) and through the resurrection showed their claim to supremacy was also false.⁵² The church's calling to live in this same example will lead it to be counter-cultural.

The difference here between both authors is in the nature of that counter-cultural approach. Hauerwas has little good to say about his surrounding culture.⁵³ His rejection of surrounding culture is so strong in his writing he effectively rejects much of what he sees. The church is distinct from its surrounding culture by being a separate culture (polis) unto

⁵¹ Hauerwas, Stanley 'Should War Be Eliminated: A Thought Experiment' in *The Hauerwas Reader* ed. By John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Durham, NC: Duke University Press) 2001 pg. 420-21

⁵² Again, this is part of the Christus Victor model of the atonement. It is not the only view of the atonement, but it forms a key part of theirs.

⁵³ It should be remembered that the majority of Hauerwas' writing relating to surrounding culture deals with his own culture or similarly influenced cultures.

itself. This 'polis' is to show those outside what has been rejected by following the false messages of the fallen powers.

Yoder's approach is subtly, yet importantly different. His counter-cultural approach does not mean a rejection of all culture and thereby any cooperative interaction with the powers and structures of society. In different cultures these structures will be in varying degrees of obedience and rebellion. This allows for varying degrees of co-operation or resistance by the church. The call upon the church, both authors see, is to critique their culture so as to know what course of action is right for the church to take in relation to surrounding culture and the powers. Hauerwas calls the church to critique surrounding culture from a distance, Yoder is willing to get more involved with the culture through interacting with its' structure, though only when the gospel would not be compromised by this interaction.

Related to this is Yoder's understanding of the church itself being a power. By understanding the church as a power, the church cannot escape understanding itself as part of its surrounding culture. As a power, the church plays an integral role in the fabric of its surrounding culture. How well this is played out in Yoder's work will be looked at in the section critiquing his thought in particular at the end of this chapter.

Church brings Critique to Surrounding Culture

Both authors believe the church should critique its surrounding culture in light of the gospel. Yet, the tone of their writing reveals different motives or means for how this is to be done by the church. Hauerwas has a harsh tone towards surrounding culture, particularly his own. His outlook for the church seems to focus more on the facet of rejecting surrounding culture.

Hauerwas calls for a hard stance by the North American church against the culture of North America. His writing, while on various topics, is unified in the call for the church to see itself apart from its surrounding culture. He emphasizes the aspect of the relationship of church and culture which separates them. For example, he sees the validity of Christian truth claims as being meaningless unless the church recovers its identity as a political community,

one separate in outlook from the surrounding culture.⁵⁴ There is no Christian message without this community. There is no Christian belief that makes sense without a concrete body of believers practicing those beliefs. Creating the church, for Hauerwas, absolutely requires a separation from culture, a creation of a new political entity which rejects the false messages of the surrounding culture.

Yoder's approach is quite different. He, no less than Hauerwas, sees the church not to be guide or ruler of its culture. Yet, his attitude towards culture is less harsh than Hauerwas. Rather than speak of the rejection of culture, he speaks of raising the standard of holiness within the church. This holiness, lived out in the surrounding culture, show that culture an alternative way of viewing life does exist.

Yoder's writing looks strongly to the positive side of the relationship between the church and its surrounding culture. Yoder writes of *The Christian Witness to the State, Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World*, and *For the Nations*. Yoder sees Christians as being the church wherever they seek to follow Jesus as Lord. Yoder wants the church to focus on identifying the example of Jesus and to follow it in the midst of the surrounding culture.

Yoder's concept of the church being separate from surrounding culture is for the purpose of constructive critique by the church of that culture. It is more than just stating what is wrong with a culture. The critique begins with the church first understanding the gospel, interpreting its surrounding culture through the gospel, then living out the gospel within that culture.

Hauerwas contains these ideas of Yoder's as well, as he was influenced by Yoder's work. Yet Hauerwas is too strong in his rejection of culture. Rarely does he say anything positive about culture. His rejection does not give a balanced approach or model in critiquing culture. He gives little capacity for the church to see anything positive within its culture. This surely is one of the factors, despite his denials, that gives rise to the charge of his being sectarian, of advocating withdrawal by the church from its culture. With little or nothing good to say about the surrounding culture, Hauerwas leaves the church in little else but an antagonistic

⁵⁴ *After Christendom* pg. 26

relationship with its culture.

Yoder, on the other hand, while still termed as sectarian, is not like Hauerwas in this respect. Yoder's model for the church to critique its culture allows the church to be for the benefit of the surrounding culture. The voice of the church may, however, still be often misunderstood and rejected. The church's critique of culture allows it to speak for the benefit of the culture, as well as the benefit of the church as it stays focused on its own calling. This latter point of staying focused on its own calling Hauerwas emphasizes to the near exclusion of looking to benefit culture.

Another aspect where Hauerwas goes too far, I believe, is his position that salvation cannot be known in the world as an alternative way of living without the existence of a concrete church.⁵⁵ There is some truth in his statement. The church is God's primary instrument to reveal salvation to the world. Salvation is also more than just something for the 'by and by', but is also for the 'here and now'. The full meaning and outworking of this salvation can also only be done in community, as what God has made salvation to be experienced and lived out in community. The outworking of salvation is done in the context of community with other believers. Yet, Hauerwas does go too far in this claim. He would deny the experience and capability of cross-cultural church planters for example. They often do not have the experience of a church community due to the nature of their ministry. Yet, are they not part of the church as well? Can they not offer salvation, though not a community in themselves? The declaration of another way of living is not found in the church, but in its message, the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel is beyond the possession of the church alone. It is the message of God, who has given the church a primary role in spreading to the world. By itself the gospel message shows that another way of life is demanded by its call. The gospel message stands on its own to all people whether there is a faithful church or not giving it a living example.

Salvation is shown to the world through the gospel of Jesus Christ. That gospel can be presented in various forms, by word such as reading or preaching and by action whether individual actions or communal as in the church. All of these, when true to the gospel,

⁵⁵ *After Christendom* pg. 35

display the way to salvation. Acceptance of salvation demands a different way of living than that of the world. Hauerwas, I feel, focuses too strongly on the communal and action oriented means of proclaiming the gospel. He speaks of preaching, but usually this is reserved for the edification of those within the church. Effectively he limits the message's possible effect by limiting the means by which the message is to be heard.

Church refuses to Manage Surrounding Culture

Related to their advocacy of pacifism is Yoder and Hauerwas' affirmation of anti-Constantinianism. The term Constantinianism refers to the church and culture model of the church authority over or identification with its culture, essentially merging church and surrounding culture into an inseparable unit. It looks to Christianize society, ultimately removing the line between the church and the surrounding culture.⁵⁶ Both authors see this movement as an error the church needs to avoid. They see Constantinianism declaring that the true meaning of history and salvation is found not in the church but in society surrounding the church.⁵⁷

Both authors reject this movement as incongruent with the gospel message and example of Jesus.⁵⁸ The church gets pushed from the centre of God's plan of spreading the message of redemption to humanity to the periphery. The centre of God's activity becomes the world rather than the church. Both see this shift as dangerous as the church can confuse its mission as conforming the surrounding culture first, rather than conforming themselves to the gospel first. Yoder and Hauerwas see the church as the centre of God's activity within human history.

There are a great number of consequences they cite as directly from the Constantinian

⁵⁶ Yoder, John Howard *For the Nations: Essays Public and Evangelical* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1997 pg. 104, 107 An example of this would include the state churches of the Post-Reformation period where one's religious affiliation was based upon the ruler's preference. It continues in some ways in Western European countries where one's religious identification is based upon their country of origin. An example of this outside the church would be many modern Islamic countries where being of that country equates to being Muslim.

⁵⁷ *Original Revolution* 152-5

⁵⁸ There are other viewpoints concerning the nature of what is termed as Constantinianism and the example of Jesus concerning the powers. Interaction with those views is just not possible here. The focus is on what Hauerwas and Yoder see in relation with one another.

experiment. Among them is a loss of true catholicity in the church. By being tied to surrounding culture the labels and barriers of that culture infiltrate the church. Churches can then fail to see past the borders of their culture, whether social, economic, national, even denominational. The church views people in the way of the surrounding culture rather than by the standards of the gospel. This can cause isolation and division within the church, as Christians separate along cultural, national, economic or other boundaries. Instead, both authors argue the first loyalty of Christians is to one another irrespective of any barrier surrounding culture has set up.

Also, Constantinianism makes the church merely an appendage of society. Both authors see the clearest example of this in countries where there is or was a state church. Essentially, by seeking to guide and influence society through the power structures, the church usually has found itself as a tool of those same structures for purposes apart from the calling and character of the gospel. Many historical examples can be given such as many wars shortly after the Reformation where battles were fought along the line of denominational boundaries. A more current example would be Ireland with a political conflict that is identified along religious lines, Protestants against Catholics..

Church brings concrete blessing to Surrounding Culture

In terms of the concrete blessing each author sees the church bringing to its surrounding culture, Yoder and Hauerwas are quite different. This difference comes as a result of their overall message and outlook concerning the church and its relationship with its surrounding culture.

Hauerwas speaks at great lengths against what he perceives as the evils of his culture. While Hauerwas speaks against these evils, the primary focus is not on changing them in the surrounding culture, but on removing them and their influence from the church.

In regards to surrounding culture, Hauerwas does advocate some constructive action, not in seeking to change the actions or perception of the powers, but in social action based upon his understanding of the gospel message. For example, in *Resident Aliens*, Hauerwas gives the example of Gladys, who instead of supporting a day care centre within the church to support those struggling to make ends meet, she suggests meeting the needs of the homeless

in their community. The reasoning is that a day care centre is supporting the agenda of materialism, whereas seeking to meet the needs of the homeless would more closely align with the priorities and principles of the gospel message.⁵⁹ I do not want to debate Hauerwas' interpretation of the gospel mandate here, though there is at least some truth to his assertions.⁶⁰ I want to highlight that the way Hauerwas sees encountering the powers is not directed towards the public sphere, but towards the actions of the church. The actions of the church should show a different way of perceiving life by demonstrating practically a different way, one based upon the gospel message.

In practice, Hauerwas' thought concerning how the church will bless its surrounding culture is through conflict with the powers. The false messages of the powers are confronted within the church, as the church challenges itself to be continually faithful to the gospel. The resulting faithfulness is lived out among the surrounding culture showing a different way of life. This faithfulness of the church to the gospel as opposed to the false messages of the powers composes the heart of Hauerwas' description of the church's confrontation against its culture.

Yoder, as noted earlier, speaks of culture being neither fully rebellious nor fully obedient to God. The church requires discernment to know how to interact with its culture in specific instances. This guides the nature of blessing the church offers to its culture. In those areas where the surrounding culture is rebellious to God, the church abstains involvement in those instances and works by preaching and living out the gospel to bring change to that rebellious area. In others instances the church can use an aspect of culture which is not sinful in itself, such as theatre Yoder states, and use it for purposes suited to the spread of the kingdom of God. In still other instances where culture does in ways reflect God's design, the church can partially or fully interact declaring God's approval, such as perhaps a particular legislative act. In all instances Yoder sees that it is the example of the church that is fundamental to blessing the surrounding culture.

One important facet for Yoder in this is that the church must be living, or seeking to live

⁵⁹ *Resident Aliens* pg. 118-123

⁶⁰ Hauerwas identifies the mandate of the church to care for the poor. It is not that Hauerwas has a problem with day care. If it would be for single parents struggling to make ends meet and parent effectively, he would be in support of a day care as fitting with the gospel mandate.

out, the principle or action it is calling the surrounding culture to match or imitate. As Yoder remarks, 'the church's clearest word to the world is inseparable from the church's own integrity'.⁶¹ At all times the church has influence upon its culture. It is a power. The nature of that influence depends upon the integrity of the church. If the church is faithful to its message, the gospel is revealed through word and deed. If the church is not faithful to the gospel, other messages are sent, those that cause the gospel to be disregarded or misunderstood. This is not to suggest Yoder sees a correspondence between a faithful church and positive reception of that message, just that the message of the gospel will be clearly seen through a faithful church. Yoder is not optimistic that the gospel, even when shown clearly, will be widely accepted. given widespread acceptance.

Yoder, unlike Hauerwas, does not give a great number of practical examples of actions the church could take towards its culture, though he mentions some powerful instances of the principles he espouses.⁶² The lack of examples given throughout his writing is primarily due to Yoder's belief that each different circumstance demands discernment.

Critique of Hauerwas

In this last section I want to look at individual strengths and weaknesses in each author's work. These are items that are unique to each author which help or hinder their message. This will give greater definition to their contribution to a healthy understanding of the relationship between church and surrounding culture.

Strengths of Hauerwas

For one who has equally ardent advocates and critics, Hauerwas certainly has shown himself as a theologian whose ideas get noticed. That attention has drawn some harsh criticisms, but also respect for at least some of his positions. There are some great strengths, I believe, to Hauerwas' work.

One strength of Hauerwas' thought is his call for the church to recognize the inherent struggle between the church and its surrounding culture. Hauerwas' call is for the church to

⁶¹ *For The Nations* pg. 34

⁶² He does speak about conscientious objectors and the civil rights movement to name a couple.

critique its culture by the gospel. The church must understand that surrounding culture is not a friend or ally. The church must also critique its surrounding culture, so as not to be led astray from the gospel. His approach certainly does not solve all questions of church and culture, but it does call churches to stay more consciously faithful to the gospel rather than unconsciously accommodating to the culture surrounding it.

Stanley Hauerwas' work is important because it is pleading with the Church to stay awake. The worship and disciplined practices of the Church form its character, and constant attention to remembering its story prevent its being captivated by false stories. The heart of Christian ethics lies not in the choice of the individual to do the right thing, but in the faithfulness of the Church to the character of God. For if the church does not perceive its destiny, it will be left to its fate.⁶³

His focus on the church needing to be the church relates to this. This focus brings a call to evaluate the values of surrounding culture to see how they have been allowed to define the church. Hauerwas holds out to the church the message that the resources necessary to be the church are to be found in the gospel and in practical faithfulness to that message. The church is God's and He will take care of it. In the gospel is found the necessary virtues and pattern for the church to continue and to be faithful. He gives the church a call to be unapologetically steadfast in living out the gospel.

Hauerwas' self description of being a catholic theologian is also a strength. While clearly stating his Methodist background and affiliation, he sees himself as seeking to do truly catholic theology, that is for the whole church. His influences and illustrations range from the Catholic writings of contemporary popes and Thomas Aquinas to that of the Anabaptist John Howard Yoder.⁶⁴ He does not defend a particular tradition. That allows him to take whatever he finds truthful from any tradition. He also provides an example for those seeking to look past their denominational boundaries.

Critiquing the church, at least the church of his own culture, and the influences of that culture upon it, is perhaps when Hauerwas is at his best. Arguing against Constantinianism

⁶³ Wells, Samuel *Transforming Fate into Destiny: The Theological Ethics of Stanley Hauerwas* (Carlisle, England: Paternoster Press) 1998 pg. 180

⁶⁴ It should be noted that while Yoder wrote many papers for the Mennonite church or for the Anabaptist, he also viewed himself as a catholic theologian first, rather than a Mennonite theologian, even though he was often called upon to give the Anabaptist perspective on theological issues.

or other issues, Hauerwas writes with passion and insight. His challenges to the church usually cannot be lightly put aside, even if not fully accepted. If he does not persuade, at least he hopes to provoke thought. He brings criticisms of what he sees for a specific reason. "I have done so [critiquing other narratives], with the hope of helping Christians rediscover our voice as Christians so that we may live in the world peaceably."⁶⁵ He writes powerfully and convincingly, at times, on what the church should not be or how it should not be influenced by surrounding culture. Hauerwas lays a strong foundation enabling the church to see the need to critique its' surrounding culture.

Another strength of Hauerwas, yet also a weakness, is his style. He is quite aggressive and provocative in his writing, attacking positions he sees as deficient or less than faithful to the gospel. Stephen Webb puts it well about Hauerwas,

Many theologians do not have much of a voice in their texts; you have to hear them speak in person to get a sense of who they are. They do not write like they speak, or, if they do, it is because they speak like they write -- in a formal, analytical, and dry style. Hauerwas is an exception to this general rule: you don't have to meet Stanley to know him. And for many people, reading him is as close as they ever want to get. Like all voices that are distinctive and sharp, his can be irritating and annoying. It can also be very appropriate.⁶⁶

He also uses references or illustrations that provoke strong reaction. As an example, "from the perspective of liberal Christianity, Christians who insist on the 'politics of Jesus' cannot but appear like Islamic fundamentalists -- not a bad place to be from my perspective."⁶⁷ Even though this was written before September 11th, 2001, this comparison can be difficult to accept as anything but irreverent or careless bluster, unless one is willing to work though why Hauerwas is willing to write or say such things.⁶⁸ While this kind of writing may cause some readers to turn away from his content, I believe it generally causes

⁶⁵ Hauerwas, Stanley 'Many Hands Working: A Response to Charles Mathewas' www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3818/is_200004/ai_n8896695/print

⁶⁶ Webb, Stephen H., 'The Very American Stanley Hauerwas' www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft0206/opinion/webb.html

⁶⁷ *Sanctify Them in the Truth*, pg. 188

⁶⁸ Another such statement from Hauerwas, 'I'm for the death penalty. I think they should build a guillotine on Wall Street and execute people for stock fraud.' In actual fact, Hauerwas is against the death penalty. His purpose behind the statement was to highlight that if the argument that the death penalty was to prevent crime, it would be more constructive in preventing white collar crime than murder, which can be emotionally driven. 'Stan the Man' in *The Hauerwas Reader* pg. 29

readers to interact with him, even if simply to find weaknesses or deficiencies within his position. Within that aggressive style is also a humility that seeks the criticism of others. He does call for correction and criticism of his views. Because of this his style could be described as abrasively humble.⁶⁹

Weaknesses of Hauerwas

Despite the strengths of Hauerwas' thought, there are a number of weaknesses. The weaknesses should not remove the strengths, but put them in perspective. The first important weakness in the writings of Stanley Hauerwas is his use of Scripture. This use could be described as both misuse and lack of use, depending upon the context. For a Christian theologian/ethicist, especially one who charges the church to rediscover its story concretely in the gospel message of Jesus Christ and the history of God's people, he uses very little of it to defend, explain, or promote his ideas. Even his published sermons show little direct use of Scripture referenced in the liturgical schedule he so strongly advocates.

One excellent example of Hauerwas' treatment of Scripture is found in his essay entitled 'Gay Friendship: A Thought Experiment in Catholic Moral Theology'.⁷⁰ In this essay, Hauerwas essentially calls for gay relationships to be treated as marriage by the church. He gives little place for the teachings of Scripture in his argument. He gives greater credence to his understanding of friendship taken from Aristotle, some principles from a Catholic encyclical, and the example of a lesbian couple who have stayed faithful to one another over a twenty-five year period. While one source has some Christian connection, he does not listen to Scripture. He views Scriptures as shaping the practices of the church, but in practice Hauerwas does the opposite. He interprets Scripture according to the practices he finds (or find acceptable) in the church.

This reversal of intent and practice is consistently one of Hauerwas' problems. On almost any issue his point of reference for his ideas is not Scripture, but rather from a variety of sources, sometimes Christian, but not always. It is not that truth cannot be gleaned from non-

⁶⁹ He himself describes his approach to doing theology as extreme, too much so for some others. *Sanctify Them in the Truth* pg. 177

⁷⁰ This essay is the sixth chapter in *Sanctify Them in the Truth*. The entire argument of the essay cannot be reproduced here. I will simply summarize the key points which speak to his use and consideration of Scripture.

Christian sources, but for one who charges the church to find its identity in the person of Jesus, Hauerwas fails to use that resource himself. There are a number of passages in Scripture that impact on the issue of homosexuality, yet in his essay Hauerwas mentions only Romans 1, which he holds as an obscure text on the issue of homosexuality. It is a pattern in Hauerwas to interpret Christian belief and particularly Christian practice in light of sources that are at best secondarily based upon Scripture. He bases little of his thought directly from passages of Scripture, the story he declares so foundational to the church. Reading Hauerwas demands an exercise which Hauerwas himself seems unwilling to do, filter his thought through the teaching of Scripture. His insistence upon the story of Israel and Jesus as the founding story of the church, yet failure to actually make use of it practically in his teaching harms his arguments at times and his persuasiveness in general.

Also, it is interesting that while Hauerwas writes of hope as one of the Christian virtues making Christianity possible to enact, he displays little of it in his writings. He does describe his politics as hopeful because 'as Christians we are given the resources to speak the truth to one another.'⁷¹ Yet to the idea of Christianity greatly influencing and persuading many in a particular culture he gives little hope. He gives little credence to the possibility that Christianity might take great hold in any culture to the extent that the culture would be impacted to a great degree. He does not see the church gaining numerical superiority in any culture,⁷² thus the church would never (and should never), shape culture by domination of numbers.⁷³ The weakness of this aspect of Hauerwas' hope is not so much in stating that the church will always be a minority in any culture, perhaps that is or will be the case, but that he has little hope that the powers or the foundations of culture can ever be rehabilitated by the church. He does not call the church to shy away from the struggle of advocating the message of the gospel to the surrounding culture, but it seems he has little hope that any change on a societal level can occur. This 'hope' he speaks of sounds often like hopelessness in a futile cause. Until the Second Coming, the kingdom of God will only be a colony within the world.

⁷¹ *Resident Aliens*, pg. 156

⁷² It should be noted that this may not be quite true as the culture Hauerwas predominantly references is that of his own, American society/culture. Yet his arguments citing the church as always or by necessity staying as a minority to be the church shows his view concerning the church and culture in any setting.

⁷³ While as of yet I have not found any references to the 'Religious Right' in Hauerwas' writings, I think it safe to assume that he finds that movement another example of Constantinian thinking, which he greatly opposes.

Related to this weakness is his seeming lack of allowance that God might be at work outside of the church. For Hauerwas, only the church can articulate the message of God. With this is his antagonism to surrounding culture, particularly his own. Hauerwas depicts an all out world versus the church mentality. This seems to limit his understanding of God's ability to work however He wishes and in whomever He wishes. Yet the Bible shows a number of examples of God being at work in people before those within his covenant reached them.⁷⁴ An antagonistic approach limits Hauerwas from seeing that God might be at work within the world, in ways which the church might learn from, gain from, and even join in.

This antagonism could be understood as simply a result of his style of writing. Hauerwas is abrasive and aggressive against the problems he sees within and outside of the church. Yet, he does not give much in the way of a constructive picture of what the church's effect can or should be, just isolated examples. His writings tend to revolve around making sure that outside influences do not shape the church. He does not see a role for the church to powerfully shape surrounding culture, thus leaving him open to the criticism of being sectarian. Hauerwas is sectarian in the sense that the church is not to look to shape the culture around it. It is a tension for Hauerwas of how the church is to speak to the culture around it, but at the same time not seek to shape it, even if without coercion. I do not think that this is an irresolvable tension however. With some work on how the church is called to interact with its culture this tension could be removed. Unfortunately, Hauerwas has not described if he believes it is possible or even if it is the calling of the church.

Another weakness of Hauerwas' writing is that he primarily focuses upon 'Western' society and culture, essentially that of his own country the United States. This can make it difficult in reading Hauerwas to be see how his thought relates to other cultures the church finds itself in. His illustrations for his arguments, and in particular the illustrations of what he rails against principally come from American society and the American church. While that is in some ways appropriate since he is American, it limits the immediate applicability to a wider audience not of his culture. While he makes statements in places that Christian ethics must go beyond the bounds of North American, he fails to go beyond them himself. He

⁷⁴ One Old Testament example would be Rahab. One New Testament example would be Cornelius. God also used nations to accomplish His purposes.

wants to be catholic, but usually ends up writing for North American or Western Christians.

Ultimately, what I consider to be Hauerwas' greatest weakness, through his use or lack of Scripture is a close second, is that he fails to prepare the church to go into its surrounding culture. One of the clear commands from Jesus is to go into the world and make disciples. Unfortunately there is little within Hauerwas' writings which prepares the church to look outward. He tends to focus on calling the church to look inward and learn how to be more faithful in staying away from the false messages of its' surrounding culture. Getting around to describing a model for the church's interaction with surrounding culture never happens in any depth. It appears that he assumes it will simply happen when the church lives out the gospel. Looking at the foundations of being the church is a good starting point for the church in considering its relationship to its surrounding culture. Without knowing its identity, calling, and resources the church cannot help but be conformed by its culture, rather than be a God honouring influence upon its culture and those within it. At best, Hauerwas gives us only half the calling of the church.

Critique of Yoder

Strengths of Yoder

By this point it is hopefully clear that I find Yoder's perspective on a number of issues more convincing than Hauerwas'. There are a number of great strengths to Yoder that I see.

First, Yoder's model for critiquing the surrounding culture is very helpful. Any culture has elements within it that are rebellious, obedient, somewhere in between, and some simply misused. By using discernment, the church's communal process of determining by Scripture and Spirit, what the correct course of action should be, Yoder sees the church being able to appropriately respond and interact with its surrounding culture. He provides a balanced approach between that of H. Richard Niebuhr, who was uncritical of the moral nature of culture⁷⁵ and Hauerwas, who blazes away against the evils he sees in his culture leaving little insight into what may be positive about culture outside the church. This model provides a

⁷⁵ In his book *Christ and Culture*, Niebuhr gives a lengthy definition of culture (pg. 34ff). Nowhere within that definition does Niebuhr discuss whether culture might be or do evil. It is always seeking to produce a greater good, which the voice of Christianity is but one (pg. 39-40).

way for the church in any culture to critique its culture.

Second, Yoder's use of Scripture I also consider to be a strength. He takes seriously the Scriptural text as the foundation for understanding the message of the gospel. The best example of his use and place of Scripture is *The Politics of Jesus*. Taking the gospel of Luke, Yoder looked to see what the example of Jesus' life showed and how the early church connected it to their understanding of how they should live. The example of Jesus and the history of God's people found in Scripture form the ethic of the church. That strong connection between the ethic of the church and the Scripture, particularly the teaching of Jesus, is a key strength coming from Yoder. One may not agree with all of his conclusions, but the desire to find the Christian ethic within the Christian Scriptures, particularly that of Jesus, is a strength found in Yoder's work. His method is a practical example of seeking to tie the example of Jesus to Christian practice. Whereas some areas of the church had limited or put aside the example of Jesus in determining Christian practice, Yoder puts Jesus at the centre.

Tied to this is Yoder's call for the church to understand itself as community. This message may require greater adjustment for the church in some cultures over others, but it is a necessary message. Being community is only one of the practices that Yoder calls upon the church to undertake. His book *Body Politics* speaks of five practices which give the church both opportunity to understand its calling more clearly, but also to live out its beliefs and the commands of Scripture. Uniting practice with faith is another key strength of Yoder's position. Only by living out one's beliefs is faith made evident. In other words, Yoder calls upon the church to realize and teach that only by seeking to live as a Christian can one actually call themselves a Christian. I see this as another strength in Yoder's approach, his call that faith must come into action to be shown as real.

Another strength of Yoder's work is his denial of the church being the guide or conscience of culture. The position of Constantinianism has already been defined earlier. This position has a number of fallacies which Yoder points out. The identification of the church with the surrounding culture and the perception that the church must make its culture Christian are examples of these. He calls the church to its Commission, to make disciples of all peoples, in all cultures. I believe that Yoder's aversion from Constantinianism, with the

provision of a different model of seeing the role of the church in relation to culture is a great strength in his work. It keeps the church's focus on it proclaiming the gospel and inviting people into the church, rather than assuming people are or coercing them to be Christians.

Finally, I would like to highlight Yoder's concept, though certainly not unique to him, of the two aeons, the two different streams functioning in the world. This is certainly not his own discovery or unique contribution to theology, but understanding that there is two separate ways of living or of seeing life is very helpful. The distinction is essentially that of the gospel and that of the powers who have rebelled against the sovereignty of Jesus Christ. Using this as a lens to view culture and in constructing a worldview in general is an important concept for the church. It helps the church to understand the nature of separation from its surrounding culture. The surrounding culture is something to be lived in, but not be identified with. The church is to subject itself to the authority of the powers, but know and declare that the powers themselves are under the authority of God. The concept of the two aeons helps the church identify its position in and relation to surrounding culture.

Weaknesses of Yoder

While I see a great deal of truth in Yoder's positions, there are weaknesses as well. I will start with what I see as his greatest weakness. For all Yoder says about the church interacting with surrounding culture there is little interaction shown in his writings. He speaks of this being a part of the church's mandate but rarely shows how to do so constructively. The tension is that Yoder says the church needs to be separate from surrounding culture to be a credible faithful witness of the gospel to that culture. Yet, even after separating and then critiquing the surrounding culture he does not get the church back into the culture. It is as though the world will watch and want to join the church, except he does not consider it likely that the world will be attracted to the gospel.

Another weakness of Yoder is his strong view of the church as a community at the expense of the responsibility and power of the individual. Yoder says very little about the nature or possibility of the individual as an agent of change. It is always the church as a community that Yoder speaks about bringing change to surrounding culture. This lack of discussion concerning the role and responsibility of the individual also goes into the area

moral discernment. There is a silence concerning the question of whether or not the individual can know or make decisions on truth or God's calling without the community.

. A better position, I feel, would be to see the individual as a free moral agent, and the church as the primary, but not sole, means of correction, discipline and encouragement. The church is to strengthen all the individuals within enabling them through various means to live more faithfully in accordance with the calling laid upon them by God.

Another difficulty I see with Yoder is in his self description as more a catholic theologian than Anabaptist. To do this I would expect to see interaction with other traditions that upholds what is right and valuable from those traditions. Yet, Yoder says little about others traditions and writes what he believes is right, which comes from his Anabaptist, free church tradition. Yoder states his desire to write for the whole church, to include the whole church, but in practice they would seem to need to become Anabaptists to really be faithful as the church in his view. His catholic view of the church is very Anabaptist. This limits the persuasiveness of his argument. Those from other traditions will see less common ground between themselves and Yoder making acceptance of his ideas more difficult. Also, by failing to acknowledge the strengths of other traditions more, Yoder fails to acknowledge strengths of other positions that might enhance his own. Essentially, Yoder fails to use his model of critiquing surrounding culture upon other traditions in the church.

Related to this above point is Yoder's failure to see anything positive coming from the church during the time of Constantinianism. God has still used the church over the centuries while Constantinianism was the model of church and surrounding culture. Many missions organizations began and were sent during times when Constantinianism held sway. Other positive social institutions and legislation in the surrounding culture were begun by the church under Constantinianism, such as hospitals, schools, and the abolition of slavery.⁷⁶ It may not be the best model of looking at the relationship of church and culture, or of culture to another culture, yet God still spread His gospel regardless. Many current Third World churches began due to missions undertaken under or because of Constantinian motives.

⁷⁶ This should not be understood to say that Constantinianism was necessary for these to come into existence. Christians operating under a Constantinian model are not incapable of doing the work of the gospel. The argument, from Yoder and Hauerwas, is that it is not the correct model for understanding the mission of the church in relation to surrounding culture.

Yoder, at times, fails to use his own criteria of judging surrounding culture upon the church, particularly that influenced by the Constantinian model.

Conclusion

Despite his weaknesses, Hauerwas does lay out a reasonably strong starting place for the church to begin understanding the relationship to its surrounding culture. Albeit, his reasoning or sources for getting to his position could display a little more faithfulness to the very story he proclaims so central to the church. In calling the church to get its own story straight first, tied with the persistent call for the church to live out its beliefs, Hauerwas gives a strongly positive call to the church. His position however is not complete. He fails to give a strong foundation for the church to positively engage its culture, particularly the 'powers' of that culture. Whether it is cynicism that keeps Hauerwas from seeing the possibility of their redemption or something else, his writings fail to provide a structure of how to go into culture based on the foundation he proposes. Hauerwas, with caution, can be helpful to the church, but more is needed. But that too fits the call of Hauerwas, for what the church believes and does must be informed by community. More voices beyond Hauerwas are necessary to provide a fuller description of the call to the church given by Scripture.

On the whole, I must again state my affinity for much of what Yoder states, though I would like to make a few more moves than Yoder does. He gives a good foundation, I believe, for the church to understand its place and role in surrounding culture. What he lacks, I feel, is the same approach he used in *The Politics of Jesus* looking at the book of Acts and Paul's epistles to see the nature of the early church's evangelistic outlook and outreach to its surrounding culture. I do not think that that the separation he advocates was so strongly held or recognized then. That question is somewhat beyond the scope here, though some of it will come up in the next chapter looking at the practical benefits that can come from listening to these authors' works.

Chapter Four - Yoder and Hauerwas' Constructive Call to the Church

Introduction

John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas, while linked in many ways, do have definite differences. With all the criticism laid against these two men for their 'sectarian' or 'tribalistic' thoughts, what can be said for their constructive call to the church? While their thought is often stated in negative or critical language, particularly that of Hauerwas, they do have a positive vision for the church. At this point both theologian's positions have been described, compared and contrasted. Here I want to explore contributions from their combined call to the church.¹ While they have written from particular backgrounds, their own description of their work is for the entire church to consider and respond to. Both authors desire to see the church change in its understanding of its mission and practice because of their work. Theology, done on any doctrine, for both authors, must eventually find itself in practice. If not, the effort of doing theology has gone awry.² This chapter will seek to build from their view concerning the church to state my own current understanding and belief concerning the relationship of God's church and whatever culture it finds itself in.³

Ultimately, both authors call upon the church to be the church, a catch phrase of Hauerwas. They both see the primary task of the church being to make disciples of those within the church, as only those who accept the truth of the gospel can be expected to live the standard demanded by it. This leads to the church being not of its surrounding culture, yet still within it. To do this the church must show its difference in practical ways, for example

¹ It should also be said that the positions held by these authors are not unique to these two. There are a variety of people who express similar positions in part or nearly in whole.

² For example Hauerwas cites Barth as showing that theology cannot be separated from ethics, and that theology is a practice of the church. Hauerwas, Stanley 'How 'Christian Ethics' Came to Be' in *The Hauerwas Reader* ed. By John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Durham, NC: Duke University Press) 2001 pg. 49

³ I must acknowledge at this point however that many examples or illustrations will find their root in North America. This is for three reasons. First, it is the culture in which both authors and myself know best. Second, most of the illustrations of Hauerwas and Yoder of the church and its relationship to its surrounding culture concern North American culture. Third, it is also the assumed culture of the vast majority of those who will read this. While I will seek to describe the call of the church in universally applicable statements, illustrations will be from one culture.

living out pacifism.

Church called to be the church

That the church should be the church sounds obvious, even not worth saying. Yet for Yoder and Hauerwas this describes a central tenet in their vision for the church. This is true no matter what culture or denomination the church may find itself in or describe itself as. The meaning behind this statement has a great deal of concrete meaning and purpose for both authors. It speaks to the need for the church consciously to conform itself to the gospel rather than its culture. Hauerwas states that his vision for the church (in America) is for it to be faithful.⁴ What that faithfulness means or looks like will be described, in part, here.

First, as stated already, the church must conform itself not to its surrounding culture, but to the gospel. It is the gospel, the working of God through history culminating in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which has brought the church into existence and gives the church its purpose and calling. With this being the case, the logical conclusion should be that the church should seek to shape itself according to its teaching. Yoder and Hauerwas do not deny that others believe this, even those with whom they disagree. They disagree with the shape of the teaching the church has accepted, including among other things the proper relationship of the church to its surrounding culture. They see the church as having accepted too much of its culture rather than critiquing it.

I have to agree with their assessment. Many aspects could be pointed to. The individualistic nature of North American Christianity is one example of the surrounding culture's message being accepted by the church. The idea of faith or religion being a private or personal choice with no outside authority beyond that individual has crept into the church of North America. Giving authority to others in the church to invoke discipline for one's decisions is not a widespread concept accepted by the North American church. Personal authority, a cultural value, goes against the communal nature of the church.

⁴ 'Faithfulness First'

Both authors also call for the church to critique its culture as part of its mission. Critique of surrounding culture is a primary aspect of the mission of the church. To do this some things are required. First, the church must consider itself separate from the structures of its culture. This separation is not in the sense of participation but of identity. It is impossible for a church to escape its culture, nor is it supposed to do so. The church lives under the authority of the powers, and in its surrounding culture, it must do so to exist as a human institution.⁵ To critique its culture honestly, the church must be separated in the sense of allegiance so as to not feel any need to defend its culture. There may be elements of its culture that the church can accept, even praise, yet that does not validate the culture itself to be defended or praised by the church.

When the church sees itself as tied to its culture, dependent on or shaped by it, the church can easily confuse the messages of its culture with the gospel. This is what Yoder and Hauerwas want the church to cease doing. By conforming to their culture, the church begins to distort the gospel message, even if unintentionally. Conformance to the culture, in this context, means conforming to the aspects of culture that are disobedient or blatantly rebellious to God. This can include values or priorities, as well as particular practices that are based out of those values.

This means thinking differently about the church. It means stopping to think about the church in national, denominational, or any other term that divides the church. This does not necessitate an ecumenical movement bringing out one church again. It means seeing others in the church first as Christians, therefore as the closest of family, regardless of denomination, nation, race, socio-economic status, or any other boundary a surrounding culture has set up. Christ came to create a people that would be beyond any such boundary. Galatians 3:26-29, as well as other passages in Scripture,⁶ speak of this. Through faith in Jesus the barriers of ethnic, social and gender are rendered unimportant to identification with Christ and with other believers.

⁵ I say human institution to express that it is made up of human beings. The origin of the church is divine.

⁶ 1 Pet. 2:9-10, Eph. 2:11-22 are two other examples

Only by withdrawing from identifying itself with its surrounding culture can the church hope to proclaim it to be such a people. This withdrawal is not that of complete withdrawal, which would be impossible. The church still lives and functions within the surrounding culture, using the same language for example. What the church must withdraw from are the rebellious aspects of the surrounding culture as much as possible. Aspects of surrounding culture can be fully participated by the church. This requires discernment by the church in seeing what can and cannot be participated in.

There is value in having a tradition, which denominational names can espouse. Traditions or denominational labels have their place in helping form community. There is value in seeing oneself as a Mennonite if it is aiding the practice of living out the aspects of the gospel message classically espoused by Mennonites. Tradition can help frame interaction between the church and surrounding culture. If tradition or denomination becomes a label to exclude others in the church, such as Lutherans or Catholics, this becomes an unhealthy barrier with the church. The only barrier the church must retain is that there are still those outside of the church who need to see, hear and accept a different way to live, one that is based upon truth, not lies, which all cultures tell in various forms.

Another aspect of the church conforming itself to the gospel over the culture surrounding it is to call its members to a high standard of obedience to the gospel. This could be taken in a legalistic sense, but this is not the intent of either Yoder or Hauerwas. This is one of the temptations to be avoided, as it is a form of the very Constantinianism they both abhor. A legalistic approach would create a system that would coerce members to conform, rather than produce a people freely choosing to be a community of faithfulness accountable to one another. This call to obedience should be understood as that of a community all understanding that they are not completely faithful yet. It is a call to one another to be more of what they have been made to be by the work of the Triune God. This practically means that the church must demand its members be accountable to one another to increasingly conform to its understanding of the gospel.

This unfortunately can easily lead to a legalistic community. This is not the goal. This is

where the nature of community and communal accountability is important. It requires communication and grace be shown by the church. It requires the principles of church accountability and discipline outlined in Matthew chapters five and eighteen and First Corinthians five are matched with Romans fourteen and fifteen. If there is concern about another believer's actions, behaviour or decisions, open discussion should take place. Each person can share his or her perspective, hopefully coming to agreement, even if that is agreement to disagree on the issue. What one believer is free to do, another may not be. This may require at times that some freedoms are restricted or given up, but this is not legalism. The Holy Spirit is involved in this process. Questions of this nature should be answered prayerfully by those involved. Legalism, by my definition, is seeking to enforce one's own or a human restriction upon others. The church is to seek God's standard on all things. If this is done, what is arrived at will not be legalism, but righteousness. Obviously this has been said in ideal terms, people can always bring their agendas rather than seeking God's. That is another reason for the community to be involved. The community should act as a barrier to one person enforcing their agenda upon others.

Another helpful insight from these authors is their view of evangelism\discipleship. The goal of the church is not bringing in new people as an end, but to call all people to become disciples of Jesus Christ. This does not diminish evangelism but rather informs it. It means that evangelism should include with it the message or understanding of what demands the gospel makes.⁷ It means that the church needs to take its efforts at discipleship more seriously calling the members of the church to grow in conformance with the gospel in community with others having the same goal. We should not be afraid to call one another to faithfulness, knowing that we too will be called to account.⁸ This call to accountability helps

⁷ In many countries of the world this is more apparent than in North America. In many Muslim countries, for example, part of the consideration for someone becoming a Christian involves an understanding that their life may be endangered by that decision. I think that all evangelism involves some sort of requirement for change, otherwise why bother considering the message in the first place (or why bother giving it). The issue comes more from the aspect of discipleship, the continuing process of conforming oneself and one's community of faith to the gospel message.

⁸ Jesus' own teaching contains this principle from the Sermon on the Mount to his instructions to the disciples

conform the church to its foundation, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Another important aspect of the church's ability to conform itself to the gospel rather than its surrounding culture is how the church defines its success. Yoder writes that the church needs to abandon the idea that producing change in its surrounding culture is its calling. If producing change becomes the goal of the church the gospel can get left out of the church's message and actions. This was one of the weaknesses of the social gospel movement. It became a social movement that lost the gospel message. The church is not to ignore seeking positive change in its surrounding culture. The calling of the church is, again, to be faithful in living out the gospel message. The church can get caught up in desiring to improve its culture to make it more Christian. Working to improve aspects within the surrounding culture, such as unjust laws or practices, is not the same as seeking to make the surrounding culture Christian. There is a difference between a culture reflecting Christian values in its laws and a culture or society that considers or calls itself Christian.

Yoder gives what I consider to be an excellent paradigm or set of criteria for the church to evaluate its surrounding culture and how to interact with it. He suggests evaluating surrounding culture by looking at the facets of culture that can be fully participated in by the church and those that cannot be in any way. This will most likely be the minority of facets of surrounding culture. Here is one area where Yoder's insight of the shading of obedience and disobedience within the powers is made practical. As the powers are usually not fully obedient or disobedient to God, so too are the facets of culture under the influence and authority of the powers neither fully obedient or disobedient. There may be facets of surrounding culture that the church can partially participate in, such as the justice system of the United States. There are facets of the justice system which actually provide or call for

in Matthew 18. That followers of Him should be responsible for the growth and practice of holiness is simply part of what Jesus taught His followers to do.

justice, there are other facets which do not. The church can involve itself in those facets which honour the call of God for justice and call upon those that do not to change. Another aspect of Yoder's paradigm is the consideration of facets of culture and their use by the church. Some aspects of culture, such as the theatre or film industry, can be used obediently or disobediently. Again, the church can use and participate in these facets in ways that honour God and abstain and critique those that do not. This requires discernment by the church, including the exercise of freedom among the church of some members being called to serve in ways that others cannot.

The only body called to be Christian is the church itself. Yoder writes a great deal in his *The Christian Witness to the State* about the fallacy of this and Hauerwas echoes this sentiment as well. The church should not confuse its identity by identifying with its particular culture or in what that culture defines as success, progress or improvement. Success is staying obedient to the gospel's call upon Christians and upon the church.

Again, this demands that the church critique its own culture by the gospel. It requires a kind of separation from that culture. This separation is one of worldview, not of geography or attempting to create its own isolated culture. This is the difficult balancing act the church must work out. The church is called to be in its surrounding culture, yet not of it. The church's call is not to create its own culture separate from the one surrounding it. Rather the church must live out the gospel interacting with the surrounding culture in a way that will reflect what God has done through Jesus Christ.

One excellent example of this can be seen in the work of Don Richardson in Papua New Guinea.⁹ He came into a culture which had not only never heard the gospel message, but had not had real contact with 'civilization'. Richardson learned the language and as much of the culture as he could being an outsider. His communication style was to find images and terms within the culture that he could relate to the truth of the gospel. The message of the gospel was new to the Sawi, but it was communicated in terms that were familiar. By introducing

⁹ In the book *Peace Child* Don Richardson records his experiences and the story of bringing the gospel to the Sawi people.

the gospel Richardson caused a change in the Sawi culture. There were certain practices, such as deceiving enemies, that the Sawi believers recognized they needed to discontinue. Other practices, such as much of daily life and the care for children exhibited by their culture, did not need to be discontinued. The church did not seek to change to be like Don Richardson. They changed to adapt their cultural practices and lifestyle to greater adherence to the gospel. Don Richardson did not teach them to become North American, but encouraged them to become Christians in a Sawi context. I am not sure that either Yoder or Hauerwas articulate this distinction and tension well.

The constructive benefit to the church here is actually quite profound. By seeking to interpret the surrounding culture by the gospel the church can begin to see ways to better reflect the gospel to its culture. The church can see how to more faithfully live out the gospel in their culture, having exposed false messages within its surrounding culture. It can see how the surrounding culture has been influencing them away from faithfulness to the gospel. This can reform the practice of the church as well as better inform the critique of the church upon its culture. That cultural critique is to be done in community is vital to the exercise. Every believer has insight and experience with the messages of their culture, as well as their experience of the gospel. For example, those within the church who have experience of other cultures can aid the church in seeing more clearly the presuppositions of their home culture.¹⁰ Their experience can hopefully bring a little more objectivity in viewing the culture in question. The church can collectively work out the meaning of living out the gospel within its surrounding culture. This can take place in various areas of the church from the writings of theologians to the practical experience of believers in the church. There are other factors which must be at work however for this to happen. These will be discussed more below.

One more note should be added concerning the call to the church from these two authors in this section. This concerns the call for the church to be effective in its ministry. At times both authors can come across as pessimistic that the church can even be effective in any way

¹⁰ This can also go the other way as well with newcomers to a culture seeing what those within do not even realize is there.

in its surrounding culture. What needs to be understood is the definition of effectiveness in the ministry of the church that they stand against. They reject the notion that the church's primary responsibility is to better the surrounding culture. This is not the standard on which the church, at any level, should evaluate itself. It is not the effect on the surrounding culture that determines whether the church has been successful. What determines success or effectiveness in ministry for the church is that people are growing as disciples of Jesus Christ. As people grow as disciples they will act out in love for others, particularly those within the church. This was Jesus' command to the disciples in John chapter fifteen, that they would love one another. This will hopefully influence the surrounding culture positively in some manner, but not necessarily.¹¹ In reality, there are instances where a church that is training people to be disciples of Jesus Christ will generate a harsh, even violent, reaction from its surrounding culture. Even this kind of reaction benefits the surrounding culture. This is because, to play off an axiom of Hauerwas, the world has been shown to be the world by the church. There are any number of examples of this from Muslim or other countries such as China and India.¹²

Mission of the church: To make disciples

Another important emphasis that Yoder and Hauerwas bring to the church in varying degrees through their writing is that the goal of the church is to make disciples. They see this as being the overarching task of the church. Every practice and action of the church in some way is based on the foundation of creating or training people to be followers of Jesus Christ. This is what Hauerwas sees as being the faithful church.

There are many purposes the church has placed as highest priority. For example, recent

¹¹ In John 15:18, immediately after commanding the disciples to love one another, Jesus tells the disciples that the world (surrounding culture) will hate them apparently because of their showing love for one another, since that communal love will show their loyalty to Jesus.

¹² K.P. Yohannon in his book *Revolution in World Missions* (Carrollton, TX: gfa books) 2004 shares many examples of how native missionaries would face beatings, stonings, and death threats because of their work. Persecution for being Christian is commonplace in many places of the world today. Jesus also told His disciples, and by extension all disciples, in John 17 that they could expect hostility because of following Him.

works that have had wide influence in the church are Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Church* and *Purpose Driven Life*. Both books identify five purposes worship, evangelism, discipleship, fellowship and service. These purposes all have Scriptural foundation as the proper activity of God's people. That the church should pursue these purposes is not the issue. The emphasis of Yoder and Hauerwas would be to put these purposes in perspective. They all need to be understood as having their focus in creating or training people to be disciples of Jesus Christ.

I would suggest that it would look something like this. Worship is the practice of acknowledging God in all things. The act of communal worship should focus our attention upon God and from this we learn to see things from His perspective. It shapes how the church views the world around. Among other things, it causes disciples to see themselves and their priorities in the perspective of God. Evangelism is the function of the church that begins the path of discipleship. It is a call upon the church, especially for those who have the gift of evangelism. Evangelism is both an individual function, expressed through members gifts or witness and communal as the community of the church expresses a different form of communal life than that of its surrounding culture.¹³ Fellowship expresses itself in the form of the community living out its calling to one another. It speaks to the quality and depth of the relationships between Christians. The caring of the church for its members and the nature of how that caring is done is an outcome of looking to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. At its' deepest level it requires that Christians see other Christians as family. Fellowship for believers, true fellowship, has a foundation in the common identity of being followers of Jesus. Service covers not only service to one another within the church but also to those outside. The church serves because it is called to serve. This service shows in the use of each member's gifts on behalf of others as well as looking to serve the needs of those around them whether a part or apart from the church. Service, using the gifts and calling given by

¹³ In each culture the form of community life of the church will have different distinctive features than its culture. This simply reflects the differences between cultures. I should also note here that Yoder has little to say about the individual in regards to evangelism, but roots it in the act of the church as community.

God, builds up the community and gives the individual opportunity to practice living out his or her commitment to Jesus Christ. Being a disciple of Jesus Christ means growing in obedience and understanding in all these areas.

Discipleship is essentially training or learning a craft. While a certain portion of discipleship is what we believe, the majority of being and learning to be a disciple is practical. Being a disciple means practicing to live out that faith and learning more along the way. This will happen in relationships inside and outside of the church. The evidence and outworking of discipleship will also affect those inside and outside of the church.

The rites of the church also serve this purpose. Baptism and communion, both authors see, as practices that inform people what the church believes and what is demanded of them as followers of Jesus Christ. Baptism serves as the initiatory rite of entrance into the community of disciples. It visualizes the change enacted upon the participants because of the work of Jesus and their acknowledgement of entering into the community of now fellow disciples. Communion forms the church as disciples by requiring that everyone is viewed equally and that harmony in relationships is of great importance. Keeping in right relationship with other people gives great opportunity to practice many of the qualities exemplified by Jesus and shown within Scripture for followers of His to show to others.

By narrowing the focus to the single purpose of creating, making, and living as disciples the church benefits. It aids people to see that becoming a follower of Jesus actually requires continual conforming to His example, rather than simply portraying a veneer. It drives the church to see itself as those who need to hear and learn from their Lord as well as from those within their congregation who they can learn from. I believe the church when it sees its goal to make and train disciples will be more able to call for transformation and action in its members.

Standard of Faith only for Christians

Another aspect of Yoder and Hauerwas' writing that speaks strongly to the church is in their call for the church to see that the standard of how to live as a follower of Jesus only

applies to those who have declared themselves His followers. This comes as a consequence of their stance against what they see as the Constantinian temptation still within the church. That temptation brings the church to think that all people should live out Christianity or at least Christian principles.

In reality this line of thinking is tempting because of some truths inherent in this line of thought. It is true that God's principles of living are intended for humanity's best. It is also true that by living according to God's standard or at least living in closer accordance with it that people would most likely save themselves from greater degrees of harm, certainly from eternal separation from God. Neither author disputes this. What they dispute is how the church is to offer this to its surrounding culture. By seeking to conform its culture through the structures of that culture the church fails to offer a clear choice to all people. The church can easily become identified as one of many movements or ideologies seeking control, rather than an alternative option showing what life is truly about. Also, in the case where a society could or does think of itself as Christian the actual demands of being a disciple of Jesus Christ get lost. Where part of the cultural identity is Christian people can believe they are Christian simply because they are a part of that culture, as is the case in a number of European countries today.¹⁴

By demanding only the members of the church follow its message an alternative is created. This does not mean the church requires nothing of those outside the church. Part of the role of the powers is to enforce standards of behaviour, such as the treatment of children. If those standards are deficient, the church has a role in calling attention to the deficiencies. The church does not have a role or responsibility, to enforce upon non-Christians or surrounding culture that which is uniquely Christian, that is conformed to the gospel message.

The church is as separate from the world because it holds to a different standard of living,

¹⁴ This is changing, but one of the reasons why Western European countries have been such difficult mission fields is that many believe because they are French or Spanish they are Catholic and therefore saved. This problem was also experienced in the church after Constantine declared Christianity to be the official religion of the Roman Empire.

not simply another set of beliefs. This will lead those outside the church to a clearer understanding that change is required in becoming a follower of Jesus Christ. When the church has been successful in strongly influencing its society through the power structures of society it has created a veneer of Christianity rather than followers of Christ within that culture.¹⁵ It blurs the call of the gospel upon people's lives. While the call to become a Christian must be open to all, the expectation that people should live as followers of Jesus should remain only for those who call themselves so.

What the church can expect of non-Christians is that they will act, at times, in ways that are opposed to the gospel. Even if the outward appearance is good, the motives will usually be opposite to that of the calling of God. This is because they have not accepted the gospel or the authority of Jesus Christ. The church cannot require that those outside the church act as Christians; only the Holy Spirit can produce that with the cooperation of the Christian. When the church acts towards its surrounding culture it is to demonstrate in practical terms the love and reconciliation they have accepted from God through the work of Jesus Christ. In acting for fairer laws, or for the cessation of oppression, the church demonstrates the message of God's love for all people, again exemplified through Jesus Christ. Calling for fairer laws is not the same as calling for other to act as Christians or become Christians, though that would be wonderful if it occurred. Seeking Christian principles to be lived out is not the same as requiring people become a Christian. Treating people with equality can be done without becoming a Christian. Treating people with equity does not mean one is a Christian. If the surrounding culture listens to the call of the church on an issue, it should not be required from the church that it is accepted because it is a 'Christian' principle, but because it is one that is right and just. Hopefully, over time, people in the surrounding culture will see, not just in the laws or social action the church may call for, but also in the life of the church that a better way and view of life is contained in the gospel message the church does hold to.

It should not be understood that the church can say nothing to the surrounding culture.

¹⁵ This is of course meant that while there will be true followers of Jesus, the Christianity of the culture or that demanded by the culture will be a veneer only.

Yoder shows that surrounding culture is neither completely obedient nor rebellious to God. It is a mixture of these. The church can speak to the surrounding culture according to Christian principles, but holds its members to a higher standard of obedience to God's standard than it does of the surrounding culture. That higher standard includes accountability to one another in the church, something that cannot be asked of those outside the church. What the church requires of its members is loyalty to God, the gospel, and one another. This includes ideas of justice, which applies equally to the surrounding culture, but the church is not to enforce these, that is the role of the powers. The powers have been given the mandate to create a stable society, that is not the role of the church. The church can seek to convince and act in accordance with what is just regardless of what the surrounding culture does, but it must understand that it is not to act as the state or government. Members of the church may be involved with the powers, as far as they are able to conduct themselves in ways in harmony with the calling of God's holiness. Critique to the surrounding culture must also come out of the practical example of the church, even if imperfect, seeking to live out the gospel, showing the effects it has upon the lives of individuals and of the community of faith. Using means that go beyond faithfulness to the gospel are at all times to be rejected by the church, even if available means seem to be ineffective. Enforcing Christian behaviour upon surrounding culture is beyond the call of the church. Inviting others to accept the principles of the gospel, by all possible means allowed by the gospel, is very much the call of the church.

Being not of the culture but in the culture

One of the criticisms I would bring to the work of both Yoder and Hauerwas is while they are strong on showing how the church needs to be separate from their surrounding culture, they struggle to articulate a strong position for the church being in their culture. Particularly I see this as a weakness of Hauerwas' writings. Both though make statements in this direction, but never flesh them out. Both are strong in showing the call of the church to be separate from its culture, yet the church is still called to be in the world. Yoder calls for a critique from the church upon its surrounding culture. Hauerwas does a lot of critiquing of his

culture. Both write strongly, passionately, for the church to be separate from its culture. Yet the church cannot truly escape its culture, nor should it. I believe these authors together give good insight for the church to look closely at its relationship to its surrounding culture. They call for the church to be concerned more with its own foundation, the gospel, rather than fail to recognize or at least search to see how its culture may be affecting how it away from the gospel. Their desire is that the Christianity the church shows is not a cultural Christianity, but the gospel, the message based on the work of God that formed the church and shapes its purpose and ethic. This is admirable and a necessary message for the church, yet there needs to be more.

I believe that their combined position, from which I use more of Yoder's work than Hauerwas', can serve as a useful foundation for looking at the church working in its surrounding culture. The separation of worldview they espouse, the call for the church to examine its surrounding culture in light of the gospel is a good place to start. From this the church can gain some perspective in what its specific message is towards its culture and how to go about bringing that message. It is not just what the church is to do that must come from the gospel but also how to go about fulfilling that calling in its surrounding culture.

Yoder, in particular, with his freedom to see shades of good and evil, obedience and rebellion within the structures of culture allows room for the church to interact with these structures. While he does not see much freedom in participating in those structures, being a politician for example, I think there is room for this. Hauerwas also sees some merit in this, with the restriction that the person involved in the structure is participating as a practicing, active and faithful follower of Jesus. Yoder, on the other hand, is not sure that a Christian can take up roles such as politician or police officer and be faithful.¹⁶

I think there are some resources within their writings that do give some possibilities for the church in understanding its role in interacting with its culture. Using Yoder's principles regarding evaluation of the ambiguous nature of surrounding culture, the church can evaluate

¹⁶ *Christian Witness to the State* pg. 56-57

the various initiatives proposed by those outside of the church. Some of these initiatives, if appropriate or in accordance with the values of the gospel, could be supported and joined by the church. Yoder's view of seeing varying shades of obedience to the calling of God upon the powers can apply to viewing what various groups within that culture are seeking to do or promote. Whatever would call the culture to a greater obedience or at least accordance to God's standard can be appreciated and joined to by the church. God's working of grace is not limited to the working of the church alone.¹⁷ Wherever the church sees God working, the church should join or at least support. This can include initiatives such as caring and helping those who are hurting or in need, standing for laws that are right and others. This is part of the church critiquing its surrounding culture, especially in calling upon the powers to fulfill their responsibilities as given them by God.

By understanding that their worldview is separate from their surrounding culture it frees the church from accepting whatever particular groups in their culture do or assert, even if they are allies in particular initiatives. The church is also free to uphold particular initiatives from various groups, even those who might be opposed to Christianity. This can happen because the church would not be concerned with identifying itself with any particular group.

The church's focus is promoting the gospel and the calling of God upon society and individual persons. For example this would allow the church to support positions within various political parties, yet allow them to remain separate from identifying themselves, and thus the gospel, with any particular party or social structure. The church would be able to keep itself free from feeling the need to defend anything except the gospel message and its call upon the surrounding culture. As Yoder advocates participation with only those elements of culture that align with the gospel, so too can the church only align with particular policies, rather than that of the party and its platform. Yoder and Hauerwas speak strongly and show examples of the detriment of joining the gospel to a particular culture or political group. This does not mean that individuals could not work for or even run for office with

¹⁷ This is something that Hauerwas and Yoder do not write about.

particular parties. It would require that their Christian faith be kept away from identification with the party.¹⁸ Identifying the church with a group or culture, rather than particular issues, will give great opportunity to confuse the message of the gospel with the messages of the surrounding culture or outside group.

Practical Change

Another valuable facet of Yoder and Hauerwas' work is the call for practical change. This practical change in the church covers a variety of aspects. It includes the need for the church to live out its beliefs, not simply espouse them without concrete actions. The church must exemplify its beliefs in its practices, because practice is important. Change in belief in word only is not the change the church is called to. The church is called to put faith or belief into practice. Faith without work is dead. Unfortunately, change is not something always easy to accept and put into practice. Yet, there are many changes both authors call upon the church to adopt. Perhaps, this is one factor for the difficulty some have in accepting or understanding their position. Change is not comfortable, yet change is what Yoder and Hauerwas call for the church to adopt, sometimes even radical changes, for example that of pacifism. All within the church have change that will be required of them over time by God, as discipleship, growing in conformance to the gospel, is a process.

Belief is not enough

One characteristic of both authors is their demand that belief is not enough. It is not enough to state or espouse belief in Jesus, God, or Christianity. Both Yoder and Hauerwas demand that by definition faith must be acted out; otherwise it is simply not real because it has not been put into practical application. This may sound like common Christian teaching, as neither author is certainly not the first or only one to declare this. They both call upon the church to hold its members accountable to the gospel. They call for the church to keep a

¹⁸ While Yoder sees this as an unlikely calling for a Christian, I do not, though I think the struggle would be intense to stay faithful in a field where faithfulness to the gospel is not an advantage.

standard of discipleship, including the instigation of discipline when deemed appropriate. Many churches may state this as being something they believe in, yet both authors, provide a strong structure of how to go about doing this.

The church needs to teach its members that Christianity is not something that is added to their lives, but rather becomes their life. Their faith becomes the dominating factor that informs and conforms their actions, desires and worldview. Hauerwas speaks of the learning of being a Christians as that of a craft or trade. When one becomes a Christian, they can be expected to know little, if anything. They need to be taught, trained of what beliefs Christianity holds to and what kinds of living and practices that mark the church. Discipleship must mark the church, discipleship that requires change. This may scare some in the church, as it goes against the desires of our sinful natures, as well as the cultures that value individualism. Change may require the leaving of presuppositions or positions that may have been held for generations in the church. It requires seeing and doing things another way, one that can be unfamiliar. For many people this is difficult. The church needs to train its people to see that change is part of being a disciple, something that remains until death. Yet, when the church changes to be more faithful to the gospel, a more powerful witness of the gospel will be shown to the surrounding culture.

Practical change is exemplified in the practices of the church

Both Yoder and Hauerwas hold that the practices of the church aid in bringing about practical change in the lives of the members. Yoder's book *Body Politics* is about this very point, that the practices of the church, while being counter cultural, are more about aiding the church in conforming itself to its message. Hauerwas also writes concerning this in various places. Their belief is that in the practices of the church are built-in reminders and demands upon the members requiring them to conform to the gospel. This aids their resistance to or view of their surrounding culture. These practices are varied including worship, communion, and baptism. It is not that belief is unimportant, but rather that these practices give the church opportunity to put their beliefs into practice, while continuing to shape those beliefs as

well.

This makes participation in the life of the church of vital importance. The church should require its members to be active participants, not passive observers. The definition of what church membership is may not need to be redefined by many churches. What is needed is to enforce what already exists. No longer would churches allow members to believe simply attending a communal service, even regularly, constitutes the sum of the responsibility of being part of the church. Being part of the church would require contributing to the life of the church in more than money or occupying a seat once a week. A member's contribution would be weighed by their capacity, gifting and calling within that congregation. It demands a communal attitude of service towards one another. What it means is that living out the gospel and its implications becomes as important in emphasis as believing the gospel. The standard for being part of the church needs to be raised. Neither author intends this as a form of legalism; rather a standard humbly required knowing that all within the church do not fully reach the ideal. What is necessary however is evidence that the ideal is being sought after. After all, are we not called as believers to produce fruit, that is good works in keeping with repentance, the qualities of being a follower of Jesus?¹⁹

The practices Yoder and Hauerwas see as bringing this about are very practical, not simply something to intellectually accept or espouse. Worship is a practice that should orient people towards God. Baptism serves as the initiatory ritual for a person into the church community. Baptism's significance goes beyond the identification of the individual with Christ to identification with the community of faith created by the work of Christ. That community is one that is different than the culture surrounding it for it is founded and led by Christ. Communion reminds the people of the church to be in good relationship with one another. Also, it reminds the church that no one is more or less important than another. These last two rituals both see as being important to put into practice for the church to

¹⁹ Matt. 3:8 Also, it is worth remembering Jesus' words in John chapter 15. Producing fruit is a product of being faithful to Jesus. If we do not look to see fruit in our lives, nor look to aid our fellow believers are also growing we are not being faithful to our calling. We are called as followers of Jesus to produce fruit, that is both good works and also the qualities of followers of Jesus, the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23)

understand its calling and purpose.²⁰ The communal nature of these rituals are classic Christian teaching, but in some cultures, including North America, they are not necessarily Christian practice.

In addition to these practices, Yoder advocates the intentional use of the spiritual gifts believers are given by God. They are to be used primarily for the benefit of the community of faith. Using one's spiritual gifts provide opportunity to work out and practice living out following Jesus. It also reinforces the truth that all believers are part of the church and thus have their role to play in the overall ministry of the church. Some of that role will relate to the gifts they have been given by God. Failure to practically use the gifts given weakens the church and restrains the individual from greater growth as a follower of Christ that they could experience. The church needs to consistently emphasize the meaning and value of the communal value in these practices. By training and requiring its members to live out their faith in more practical ways, using the practices given to us in Scripture, the church can solidify what its identity is in contrast to the culture surrounding it.

Confrontation\Discipline is necessary

One further practice both authors see necessary to enable the church to see the solidification of its identity more fully happen is that of communal discipline or confrontation. Without concretely requiring its members to grow in practically living out their stated faith the people of the church will struggle in being faithful representatives of the gospel and separating from the surrounding culture. Simply assuming that each member of the church will automatically grow or not struggle in growing is unrealistic, even unbiblical.²¹ Those within the church need one another to continue to grow and to be increasingly

²⁰ Obviously there are more interpretations to the meaning of baptism and communion. This interpretation that Hauerwas and Yoder present is intended, to add to the meaning of these rituals. What they would replace, if anything, would be an individualistic understanding with a communal one. For example, baptism is not simply declaring the individual's faith or acceptance into the covenant, but also their identification and inclusion into the covenant community.

²¹ There are many passages that speak of the need for one another and instructions for rebuking, correcting, instructing, and encouraging one another.

faithful.²² This need is not just for encouragement and instruction, but also for rebuke and correction.

Correction and rebuke is a responsibility of the community for the benefit of one another. It should be a definite part of the life of the church and of its understanding of its calling to one another. Again, a legalistic or unnecessarily nit-picking character of this practice is not the intent. That is not the nature of either author's understanding or meaning. I believe they not only rightly see the need for the church to do this, but also in how to do this. They are doing nothing more than simply calling upon the church to live out the Scriptural principles the church has been given.²³ Yoder and Hauerwas have a difference in the nature of the authority structure in the church, yet they both see all believers having the capacity to speak into the life of another believer.

Implementing discipline in many situations is difficult. Taking the situation in North America today for example, the church could face lawsuits for disciplining members or simply have the individual(s) being disciplined leave for another church thus avoiding the discipline process. This is where having the standard of membership clear can help churches. By having the purpose and process of discipline agreed to as part of the membership process, the issue of lawsuits can be diminished.²⁴ The membership process would include teaching on the nature and process of church discipline and agreement to submitting to discipline, if necessary, by the prospective members. To deal with people leaving for another church, I would suggest two ideas. First, the church where people decide to join in lieu of going through discipline should inquire of their earlier church connections and contact that church to see in what standing they left in. Second, if the church who was implementing discipline

²² Eph. 4:10-16 speaks of this principle, speaking particularly of the use of spiritual gifts for the benefit of one another. Note also that the gifts here are to be used to prepare God's people for acts of service through which unity and maturity is achieved. Also note particularly verse 15, which calls for speaking the truth in love, which easily includes the aspect of rebuke and correction.

²³ Coming from the words of Jesus we see have passages such as Matt. 7:1-6 and 18:15-20. Paul shows his belief in enforcing discipline in cases of immoral conduct in 1 Corinthians 5.

²⁴ This may require some consultation with a lawyer to word this properly. As many churches in North America are incorporating the definition of membership can be put right into these documents as well.

can seek to stay in contact with those under discipline, if appropriate. They could also contact the leadership in the church that the individuals are going to and inform them of the situation concerning those individuals. These may help to effect discipline in situations where people look to escape discipline yet remain in the church.

This correction does not come from any attitude of harsh criticism or moral superiority, rather one of humility as a fellow believer who also struggles, fails, and has things yet to learn as well. Its purpose is not to belittle or harm, but to restore the other to faithfulness and further growth as a disciple of Jesus Christ. It seeks the truth and best for the person being confronted. If necessary, if the one being confronted needs to repent but will not, the church leadership then becomes involved. If church leadership determines that repentance is necessary, yet it is not forthcoming, the matter is presented before the church body. If the person still refuses to repent they are to be removed from church membership publicly. Again, this is not intended to bring harm to the person involved but rather restoration into what is best for that individual and for the church. The individual is graphically shown the need to repent and the church acts out its call to be holy.

This confrontation cannot be over any or every possible thing. Another aspect to this practice of discipline is the teaching of Scripture and the leading of the Holy Spirit when confrontation is necessary.²⁵ The church is not a place where failures are focused on. It is a place where what God has done and is doing is the focus. Believers are called to be accountable to one another, not to be in constant critical judgment over one another. As the church is called to present the gospel, an alternative way of life to that of any surrounding culture, the church must live out that gospel, not merely preach it. Instructing and encouraging can only bring this about to a certain degree. To more fully live out the gospel the church must correct and confront what is not according to its message, whether word, deed, or attitude. This will go far to producing a church capable of discerning the nature of

²⁵ One important passage would be Romans 14-15 where Paul outlines the responsibilities of the weak and strong believers. Neither are to unfairly judge one another nor to demand or flaunt their standard or freedom on the other.

its culture, living out the gospel in that culture faithfully and presenting to those outside the church an alternative that is true.

By practicing this, the church will require its members to live out the gospel more faithfully. In relation to its surrounding culture, the church can then more ably train its members to live more conformed to the gospel, which will aid them in critiquing their culture. A clearer alternative will also be presented to the surrounding culture by a church seeking to practically conform itself more fully to the gospel. People can change, but effective change often does not happen by one person acting alone. God works to conform His people and one main avenue He seeks to use is His church practically calling and insisting that its members to greater faithfulness, encouraging one another to the goal of greater faithfulness.

This requires courage from church leadership, lay and pastoral. It will also require courage on the part of all who would be part of the church. All believers are called to aid one another to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ. Leadership's role in the process is to teach and govern the process. Leadership would become involved in issues that grew beyond the bounds of the first level of confrontation. While this may be difficult to implement it is a procedure laid down for the church to practice when necessary.

Pacifism

One position closely associated with both Yoder and Hauerwas is that of pacifism. Yoder's pacifism is well known from his work in interacting with the just war position, his evaluation and rejection of it. Works such as *The Christian Witness to the State*, and sections of *The Politics of Jesus* provide clear descriptions of Yoder's own position. Hauerwas, likewise, is well known for his ardently declared pacifistic position. His essays/editorials concerning the war in Iraq is but one place where he passionately articulates this.²⁶ I will not

²⁶ There are a variety of places where Hauerwas mentions his pacifism. I chose this example because of the contemporary issue it relates to.

be discussing the position of pacifism in contrast with the just war position here.²⁷ Though this section I assume pacifism to be the correct stance of the church. I acknowledge, however, the ongoing discussion between the two positions as one still in process within the church. In this section I want to draw attention to what I believe are the benefits to the pacifist position concerning the relationship of the church with its surrounding culture.²⁸ Pacifism will be defined here as the pursuit of non-violence as a way of life out of loyalty to Jesus Christ.²⁹

Pacifism, by the nature of its assertions of pursuing peacefulness as a way of life, causes the church to come into conflict with its culture. Hauerwas, for example, while advocating the pacifist position speaks candidly of the church as a people who are at war. That war is not between Christians and non-Christians, but between the church and its surrounding culture. At its heart pacifism calls for the church to make clear in its actions that it holds allegiance to God first and foremost. Nothing has the authority to call the church to engage in activity that goes against its calling and purpose. God alone give direction to the church. This requires the church to see itself as separate from not only the governing authorities but also from forms of boundaries such as nationality, social standing and even from denominationalism. By separation here I mean that no allegiance or loyalty should take higher priority than that of the calling of God upon the church. Nothing is more important to defend for the church than being faithful to the gospel. Only by being separated from or not bound by these boundaries can the church build into itself the ability to clearly critique the culture surrounding it, its actions, values, and direction.

By its nature, pacifism can also help keep the church from becoming identified with the

²⁷ I also acknowledge that the terms pacifism and just war theory are broad terms with many variations contained within.

²⁸ Just war theory has had many adherents throughout the history of the church. It is not the intent here to critique or criticize that position. A detailed discussion of the support for each position is beyond the scope of this work. My intent is to spell out constructive applications for the church based upon the work of Hauerwas and Yoder from my perspective, of which pacifism is one facet.

²⁹ Stassen, Glen H. and David P. Gushee ed. *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press) 2003 pg. 166 There are other definitions of pacifism, but this will suffice for the purposes here.

destructive forces at work in any kind of conflict. When the church actively or passively allows itself to become identified with either side in a conflict (even both), which uses or will use violence, the church identifies Jesus Christ and His gospel with violence.³⁰ It can also even associate the gospel with a particular culture.³¹ By identifying itself with one side in a conflict, rather than the root problem, the church can identify the gospel with the entire nature of their ally. Pacifism can help keep the church from getting confused with its surrounding culture's violent actions by opposing those actions and providing an alternative solution or example. While the church may agree at times with its culture, the church does so on its terms, not the surrounding cultures'. Pacifism provides a strong tool to restrain the church from confusing its calling and actions with those of its culture. The peace of Christ cannot be enforced upon others, only given away by example to be accepted or rejected.³² If others outside the church choose to join the church's efforts that is commendable. This does not mean that the church cannot support or encourage those who are doing good, such as the police. Yoder acknowledged that a properly trained police force is different than an army trained for war. There is a legitimate use of force available to the powers.³³ That use of force is something the church can speak to, but is not to involve itself in. The church is to prompt the powers to fulfill their proper function as given to them by God.

Pacifism does not restrict the church taking a stand against what is wrong. It can still bring a strong response to the evil caused by the powers or people, yet uses different methods than those of violence or coercion. These means find their root in the example of Jesus and

³⁰ There are violent images and events attached to the gospel message, particularly those of the end times (Matt. 25 and Revelation for example). The key difference in these circumstances is that it is God acting not His people. While the church is to follow the leading of God, there are some activities that are God's alone. For example, vengeance would be one of these (Rom. 12:19). Pacifism, as defined here, would see the undertaking of violence as in God's domain not the church's.

³¹ There are historical examples of this. Consider the picture of Christians many Muslims in the Middle East and elsewhere have because of the Crusades. This continues even in the present with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is not to say that the perception is accurate, simply that without the separation of the church from those involved in the conflict an association is easily made.

³² Huebner, Chris K., 'How to Read Yoder' www.peacetheology.org/papers/huebner.html

³³ This highlights one of the differences within pacifism as a position, for example can Christians be police officers.

the gospel message.³⁴ That Jesus brought a concrete alternative through his life and teaching forms the heart of Yoder's book, *The Politics of Jesus*.

Pacifism's response to situations of violence or suffering caused by violence depends greatly upon the nature of the situation, or perhaps better stated it depends upon those who are involved. The church is called to stand up for the oppressed and downtrodden. This is embodied in the consistent biblical call for God's people to care for the widow and orphan. Yet, this stand for those disenfranchised, abused or neglected need not use the same tools that caused the problem in the first place. This is not to say that violence causes all problems, but that it does not solve them. All causes of evil need to be stood against and identified by the church, especially when it is unfortunately the cause.

Pacifism reminds the church that its role is not to reform or conform the world to the gospel through the power structures of this world. The church, while it should speak and relate to the power structures that surround it, is called to be faithful to the ministry that God has entrusted and empowered it with. The church, by keeping itself separate from the power structures of the surrounding culture(s), and by being faithful to the gospel can offer an alternative to the means of force, violence, coercion and war, used by the powers, to critique and offer alternative solutions to what is perceived to be evil or wrong.³⁵

When the church itself is the target of violence or force from the authorities and powers of this world, pacifism does take a seemingly weak stance. Pacifism calls for a renunciation of retaliation, but this is not necessarily passive. It speaks of non-violence, not non-resistance, in seeking to change or stand against the evil found in the world. The church can practice and support actions which stand against evil through means which do not execute

³⁴ To the Gulf War, William Willimon, co-author of *Where Resident Aliens Live*, remarked that perhaps an appropriate response from the church would have been to send 1.000 missionaries instead of associating itself with the war effort or justification for war. Pg. 114

³⁵ Nothing in the pacifist position, as intended here, excludes the role of police to order society. Both authors see policing as a valuable and necessary (not in the sense of being a necessary evil). The proper place of government and the structures of the world are supposed to, under God, provide stability and security of society so that the church can more freely accomplish its mission.

violent force to those ones enacting what is wrong.³⁶ This is embodied in the Sermon on the Mount as well as in the life example of Jesus.³⁷ The survival of the church is not the church's responsibility. It is God's responsibility. The church's responsibility is to be faithful, another aspect of Yoder and Hauerwas' call to the church.

Pacifism requires a difficult, but I believe necessary shift in thinking. It requires that the church cease to focus on being effective. An example may be stopping through war the reign of Saddam Hussein because we believe it will improve the lives of Iraqis and even of others in the world. It requires the church focus on being obedient to the call of God not just in what we do but also in how we go about bringing God's purposes about. In Yoder's words, Christian pacifism holds that there is no link in Christianity between obedience and ultimate effectiveness.³⁸ Also, pacifism removes the belief that the church is responsible for the outcome of history.³⁹ God is the one who will bring history to its' conclusion and determine the course of events. The church is called to bring change to its surrounding culture, but through faithfulness to the gospel, which includes pacifism. History should be affected by the church, but not through the means that go against the gospel message.

Pacifism informs not only the kind of the actions the church should undertake, but also the way and form in which those actions takes. It brings to the church a call to stand against evil with the practically displayed message of the gospel of Jesus Christ, rather than a 'Christianized' form of using the same tools that the authorities and powers of this world use. The church should not follow pacifism because it is distinctive, but because it is faithful to

³⁶ I must acknowledge again that there are a number of variations of pacifism. In broad terms the pacifism I am seeking to describe as helpful for the church acts strongly against evil and acts against that evil in ways that ultimately seek to break the cycle of violence by doing none in return. At times this may be impossible. In these circumstances the least amount of violence possible, without taking life is the goal. How this works in particular circumstances is beyond my ability to outline here. First, because many types of situations could be cited as possible scenarios. Second, because I am still working through some of the issues and scenarios myself.

³⁷ There have been a number of successful non-violent movements, the most influential in the last century being those of Gandhi and Martin Luther King. This is not to say that all non-violent movements will be successful, certainly they will not. But they can be faithful to the call of the gospel, even if the founder is not a Christian as in the case of Gandhi.

³⁸ *Politics of Jesus* pg. 239

³⁹ *Politics of Jesus* pg. 228

the calling of the gospel, which is the church's distinctive foundation and message.⁴⁰

Relationships within the Church

This section focuses on the actions and structure of the church within itself. This relates to how it sees and does theology. First, theology must be practical. Both authors cannot abide a separation of the practice of theology and the practicing of theology. In other words, if theology cannot be applied or remains as theoretical musings, it is not valuable to the individual or the church. Theology must be understood by the seminary and the church as irrevocably tied to practice.⁴¹ This calls the church to see that not only must they live out what they believe, but that how they live is what they believe. Tying theology to ethics in this fashion allows the church to test its own beliefs by their actions.

Laity needs to understand and take up their role in doing theology for the church. Theology is to be done in community. It is the community of faith that approves of what is good theology. I agree, with Yoder and Hauerwas on this, at least in part. I think the community of the church, both seminary and congregation, is responsible to discern what is right in belief and practice. Both are part of the church and need one another in this. One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit after all is discernment, judging whether a teaching or practice it is right or wrong.⁴² Laity needs to be empowered to place a check on the teachings of their seminaries, bible colleges, or institutions of whatever kind. Seminaries need to be empowered to search beyond their own tradition to search out the truth of God and train people for ministry within the church. This means a mutual accountability of congregation and seminary. Both bodies need one another and need to communicate to one another both

⁴⁰ This statement is made this way for flow of thought and argument. I realize that the case for pacifism has not been made here opposed to just war theory or even just peacemaking theory.

⁴¹ This is not to say there should be a separation between the two. The seminary is to serve its role within the church. The distinction here is that, in line with some of Hauerwas' observations, that the seminary can lean to separating theology from ethics and the church can lean to ignoring the necessity of thinking about theology, in a reverse way separating it from practice, or simply seeing theology as irrelevant philosophical musings that do not directly relate to their daily life.

⁴² The classic example of this principle from Scripture is the Bereans of Acts 17.

their needs and concerns. This should be done by those, from both the seminary and congregation who are identified with the capacity to discern truth. This capacity comes from a combination of experience, training, and gifting. Too much separation between the seminary and the congregation is not healthy if allowed to occur.⁴³

Conclusion

This work has been like a journey for me, one that started with the writings of Yoder and Hauerwas, so I must say something about them before my own thoughts. First, it must be acknowledged that their voices are not the only voices that must be heard on this issue. They certainly do not have all the answers for what the church is to be or do in its surrounding culture. For what and how the church is to be in its culture as part of the culture they say little and give little insight. While I do not see them as truly sectarian, they do write a great deal on how the church needs to be separate from its culture.

The relationship of church and surrounding culture is one filled with tension. The church walks a fine line balancing between being in but not of its culture. Unfortunately, neither Yoder nor Hauerwas, in particular, walk this line well. What they do very well is articulate for the church that it should view its surrounding culture better through the lens of its own message, rather than that of its culture. Their call to the church seeks to pull the church continually towards living out its own message of the gospel. Their combined strength is in provoking the church to think about its' identity as a body separated from its culture by the gospel. Their weakness is in articulating how the church is called to minister to its culture by that same gospel, though I will state that this weakness is often somewhat overstated by their critics.

The title of this work plays on the phrase of the apostle Paul's of being in the world but not of the world. There were a variety of reasons why I chose this, one being its ability to

⁴³ I know of denominations within Canada whose seminaries have had much different theologies between their churches and their seminaries. This has caused a great deal of difficulty for these churches, including schisms or individual church splits. I speak of the General Conference Mennonite churches, particularly of the 1980's and the United Church of Canada.

describe the tension of church and culture in a pithy way. That tension is strongly felt by the church all over the world in different ways. I began by stating my question of how does the church walk this line of being in a culture but not of it. I have come to agree with Yoder and Hauerwas that the beginning place comes in seeing the church, corporately and as individual members, as called to something different than the surrounding culture by the work of Jesus Christ. Only by looking to continually growing in faithfulness at what God is seeking for His church to be and do can the church faithfully be a true or truer representative of the gospel of Jesus Christ in its culture. The goal, as a disciple, is to be faithful to Jesus so as to better exemplify and minister reconciliation to one's surrounding culture. It is to be *For the Nations* rather than *Against the Nations* to play on titles of Yoder and Hauerwas respectively.

From here I align more to Yoder's model of looking more closely to Scripture and the example of Jesus in particular. It is Jesus that Paul and the author to the Hebrews exhorts the early church to look for insight into Christian living. I do not believe that the example of Jesus in the gospels can answer every ethical question possible, but it certainly to me is the right place to start for those who would call themselves His followers.

I do not see understanding the church as being separate from its surrounding culture necessitating an antagonistic relationship. Antagonism, even animosity, may come, will come according to Jesus from the world to faithful followers of Him. But this does not make the church antagonistic against its culture. By standing for what is right, the church stands for the best possible hope for its culture, even if misunderstood, criticized or condemned.

Yoder and Hauerwas call the church to look past barriers and boundaries that should not matter to the community of faith. They call for a greater ecumenism, though Hauerwas' style certainly works against that aspect of his message. Through their work the church is challenged to live out its faith and hold accountable its members to growing faithfulness to the gospel. In ways the church they describe can seem idealistic, unrealistic, but I believe it is simply intended as a standard to reach towards, one never perfectly attained. That openness to continued growth they also model in their writing, calling for correction and criticism, appreciating it when it comes. Again, Hauerwas' style may work against seeing him practice

this, but it is there. This again, I see, as a valuable example for the church, especially in the area of various traditions dialoguing together.

I feel indebted in some measure to both these authors for their work and influence upon my initial thoughts on church and culture. Yet, I also have to acknowledge that I have found a new void because of their work. I accept their call to focus on understanding and living out the gospel in whatever culture I find myself in. I see this as the foundation for understanding how the church is to interact with its surrounding culture. Yet, their work does not articulate well how to concretely act this out. I feel a lot of motivation, have many thoughts racing through my mind, and yet find no articulated constructive path through their writings to act these out on. Part of this may be intentional; perhaps Hauerwas would say I need more practice and training. But perhaps better yet, following their cue, I need to expand my community of influences adding to the voices of John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas.

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